A.R. VENKATACHALAPATHY

The Brief History of a VERY BIG BOOK

The Making of the Tamil Encyclopaedia

"A. R. Venkatachalapathy has done more than unveil the history of a lexicographic exercise. He has shown us a glimpse of modern Tamil Nadu's search for a cultural, intellectual and aesthetic self-identity"

GOPAL GANDHI, *Frontline*

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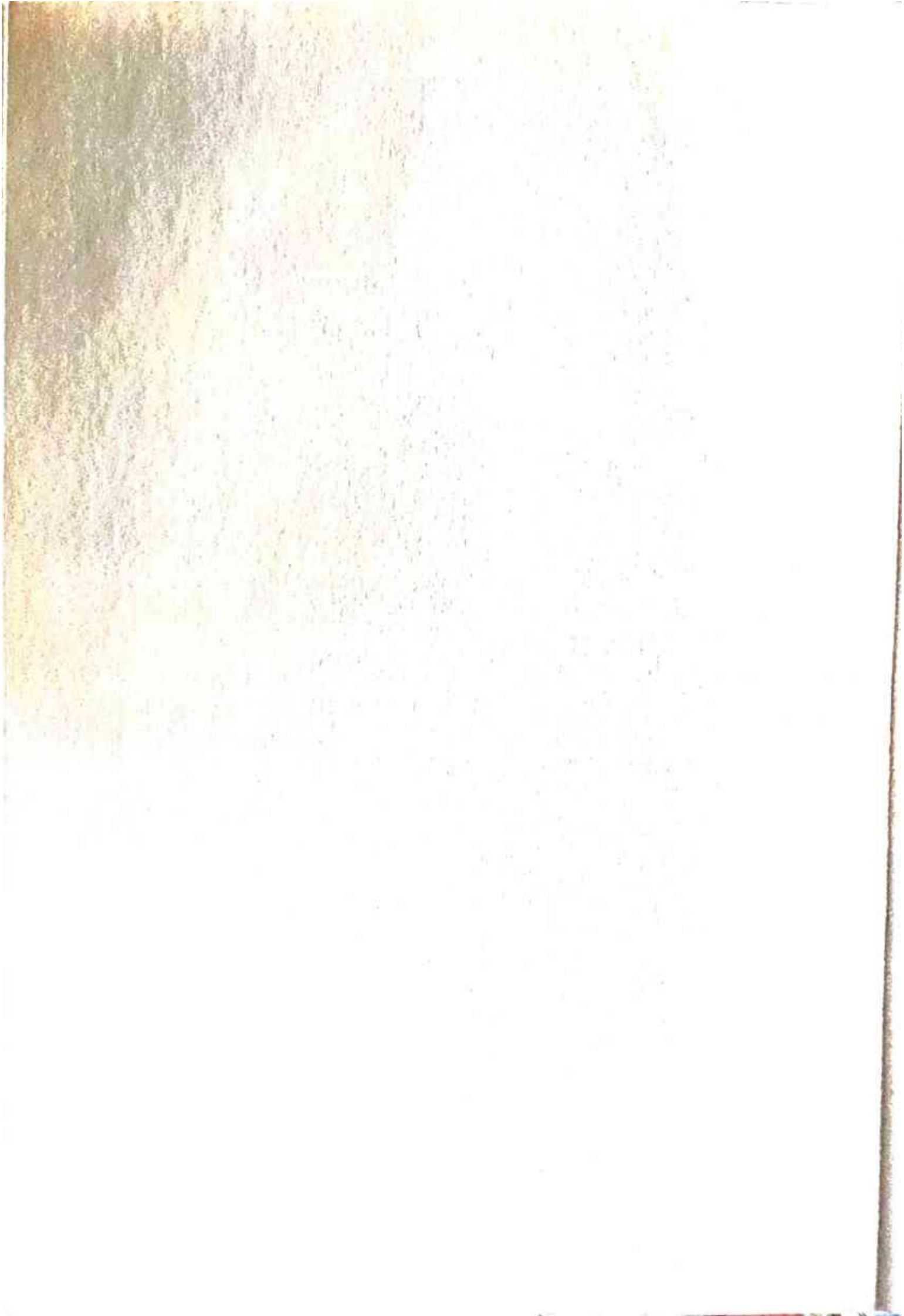

Encyclopaedia, also spelled **encyclopedia,** reference work that contains information on all branches of knowledge or that treats a particular branch of knowledge in a comprehensive manner
"Encyclopaedia", *Encyclopædia Britannica*

a book or set of books containing many articles arranged in alphabetical order that deal either with the whole of human knowledge or with a particular part of it, or a similar set of articles on the internet
The Cambridge Encyclopædia of Language

An encyclopedia (American English), encyclopædia, or encyclopaedia (British English) is a reference work or compendium providing summaries of knowledge either from all branches or from a particular field or discipline. Encyclopedias are divided into articles or entries that are often arranged alphabetically by article name and sometimes by thematic categories. Encyclopedia entries are longer and more detailed than those in most dictionaries. Generally speaking, encyclopedia articles focus on *factual information* concerning the subject named in the article's title; . . . The appearance of digital and open-source versions in the 21st century, such as Wikipedia, has vastly expanded the accessibility, authorship, readership, and variety of encyclopedia entries
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclopedia

Contents

	Illustrations and Tables	xi
	Preface and Acknowledgements	xiii
	Introduction	1
1	Mission Impossible	11
2	"If Not Us, Who Else?"	39
3	Passing the Hat Around	45
4	The Headhunt	50
5	Mission Accomplished	65
6	Bouquets and Brickbats	107
7	Conclusion: The Encyclopaedia is Dead! Long Live the Encyclopaedia!	118
	Appendix	122
	Bibliography	130
	Index	139

TABLES

4.1	Monthly Salary of the *Kalaikkalanjiyam* Staff	58
5.1	Calculation for Remuneration	83
5.2	Stock and Sale of *Kalaikkalanjiyam*, 1963	90–1
5.3	*Kalaikkalanjiyam* Volumes	96
5.4	Income and Expenditure Statement of the *Kalaikkalanjiyam*	102

Preface and Acknowledgements

In this age of Wikipedia, it must seem strange to write the history of a print encyclopaedia when such encyclopaedias are all but dead. But this short book with a long title has an even longer backstory.

I first encountered the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* as a schoolboy. Unlike Jorge Luis Borges I did not read it from cover to cover but browsed it avidly. In those days, every public library worth the name had musty volumes of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* on its stacks. A friend's uncle had a copy of the whole set and I would on visits to his home dip into it at random. The fine print, thin paper, and sturdy binding apart, I was thrilled by the level of detail that seemed distilled into the entries for every headword, the tone of authority reinforcing my sense of awe at what sentences could manage to convey through brevity of expression. I was disappointed, though, by the entry on Tamil, which seemed to suggest that my beloved language was not as old as I felt it ought to be!

Reading about the French Revolution invariably pointed me to its counterpart across the Channel, the *Encyclopédie*, albeit I had no access to it. And though my generation came of age towards the close of the Cold War which, ending in 1991, had predisposed us strongly in favour of socialism, the 31-volume work called *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia* (1974–83) never really managed to squash our probably Anglophilic admiration for the *Britannica*.

When I embarked on my doctoral research, I chanced on Robert Darnton's *The Business of Enlightenment: A Publishing History of the Encyclopédie 1775–1800* (1979), and its companion volume of sorts, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (1982). The pair had me spellbound and I swore to myself that I would, some day, follow in their footsteps.

I am not so sure-footed as to try making this book sound like an Indian version of Darnton's monument: my effort here is by comparison, as well as literally, lightweight. In fact, reading what follows may even remind the reader of the Tamil proverb about the cat that branded itself with a hot iron to mimic a tiger. I take consolation from the fact that for the Indian book historian there is no equivalent of archives as rich as those of the Société Typographique de Neuchâtel. My excuse for the slimness of what I am able to offer is that I have had to make do with gleanings and scrapings from diverse sources on meagre resources.

In 2005 I gained access to the records room of the Tamil Valarchi Kazhagam (Tamil Academy), Chennai, the publisher of the Tamil encyclopaedia. In a cleaning-up operation some years earlier, most of its files had been discarded and lost. I was disappointed but not surprised, for it is usually the Indian historian's lot to discover that the records rooms she wishes to clean out have been cleaned out just before she has gained access to them. Gone too were the index cards and allied material. All that survived were some well-bound ledger volumes and a few files of correspondence.

Nevertheless, I am grateful to M. Mathiazhagan, then editor, for providing me unrestricted access to the residual but by-no-means-poor documentation. Further material was afforded by Periaswamy Thooran's son M.P. Swathanthira Kumar, including Thooran's then unpublished memoirs. Additional assistance was given by Thooran's grandson M.S. Murali Murugavel.

While I found the draft agreement signed between the Tamil Academy and Orient Longmans in the records room of the former, I am grateful to Nandini Rao of Orient BlackSwan for emailing me a copy of the signed agreement.

V.K. Natraj alerted me to K. Shivaram Karanth's efforts at encyclopaedic compilations in Kannada, while Chandan Gowda and V.S. Sridhara helped me track down Karanth's autobiography. Abhijit Gupta not only traced Nagendranath Basu's

autobiography but also provided an excellent summary of the relevant section on the making of the *Bangla Bishwakosh*. Jatin Nayak shared his insightful papers on Odia encyclopaedias.

Material for a study such as this is not collected overnight. As will be seen from the footnote references, information has been gleaned from diverse sources. There was no goldmine to exploit; I had to make do with patient panning in the hope of catching some nuggets. I therefore thank the many libraries and archives and their staff who opened up their holdings. Special thanks to the library of the Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge; the Maraimalai Adigal Library, Chennai; and the Roja Muthiah Research Library, Chennai.

This *vamana* of a book has had many avatars.

Originating as a short essay, its kernel first appeared as an occasional paper of the Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge, in 2006 and subsequently in a volume edited by Swapan Chakravorty and Abhijit Gupta, *Moveable Type: Book History in India* (2008). In 2018 I rewrote it extensively in Tamil and delivered it as the Tiruppur Rathinasamy Samiammal Endowment Lecture at Avinashilingam University for Women, Coimbatore (February 2018), and as the inaugural M. Sivasubramanian Memorial Lecture at the Roja Muthiah Research Library, Chennai (December 2018). The revised text of these lectures was published as a monograph, *Tamil Kalaikkalanjiyathin Kathai* (2018). I reworked this as a longer essay for a bilingual (Malayalam and English) volume commemorating two hundred years

of Malayalam printing (*Vakkile Lokangal: Achadi Malayalathinte 200 Varshangal*, 2021).

The present book is substantially based on the Tamil monograph, with considerable additional material. Using this version, I now expect to revise and expand the Tamil book! Perhaps those who cannot hope to emulate Darnton keep themselves occupied with expansionist ambitions.

I am grateful to the audiences and readers of this book's various earlier iterations for their enthusiastic comments. Aditya Balasubramaniam gave the manuscript a critical look. Additional thanks are due to V.K. Natraj and S. Thillainayagam for comments and edits to the final version.

It has been a decade since Rukun Advani published my *The Province of the Book*. It is a pleasure to work with him again, to celebrate ink and print.

22 June 2022 Chalapathy

Introduction

THE STANDARD response of the colonial Indian middle class to Western knowledge was a sense of "inadequacy" and "lack": of history, of biography and autobiography, of prose, of the novel, and so forth.[1] In the Indian languages the absence of an encyclopaedia – that spectacular monument of the Enlightenment, that unending source and repository of dispassionately rational knowledge – was one such perceived lack. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* loomed large in people's minds and it was the dream of many intellectuals to replicate its achievement in their own languages.[2] A language without an encyclopaedia was deemed no language worth the name, so a handful of zealous and intrepid intellectuals across the country tried their hand at making one. The magnitude of the task was daunting and only faltering attempts are in evidence under colonial rule.

[1] Dirks, "History as a Sign of the Modern".

[2] For a history of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, see Kogan, *The Great EB*.

Nagendranath Basu's (1866–1938) 22-volume *Bangla Bishwakosh* (the Bengali encyclopaedia), published between 1887 and 1911, was an early attempt. The *Bishwakosh* was begun by the brothers Rangalal and Trailokyanath Mukhopadhyay. Their first 32-page fascicule – i.e. a separately published instalment – came out in May 1885, and at least nine more such were published early the following year. Even though Trailokyanath sailed off to England without his brother, nine further fascicules came out by May 1887 under their joint names. When Trailokyanath prepared to sail off a second time, his exasperated brother made over the press and the interest in *Bishwakosh* to one Nagendranath Basu. This Basu had already begun work on, and even published, the 400-page first volume of *Shabedendu-mahakosh*, a historical dictionary.

How did the 21-year-old Nagendranath Basu come to accept this commission? In his autobiography, he recalls that, when on a hunt for manuscripts in Murshidabad, "a radiant mother goddess" appeared in his dreams and bade him "Go to Calcutta and take up the responsibility of the *Bishwakosh*." This was just the afflatus he needed to get going – no one in his right mind was foolhardy enough to attempt making an encyclopaedia without firm supernatural prodding.

It took Nagendranath Basu four years to publish the second volume (1891). The twelve volumes under his editorship were printed and published by Upendrachandra Basu of the Great Eden Press in Calcutta.

Over the course of producing the *Bishwakosh*, it would seem from Nagendranath Basu's autobiography that his worries were chiefly financial, for, apart from telling us that the work was laborious, he says precious little to indicate the intellectual challenges. Much of his writing was done between noon and 5 p.m., a schedule which did not suit the chief recipient of his daily labour, the printer, who was only free after eight. (It was not uncommon for writers, specially those with their own presses, to have their copy composed even as they were writing.) Others promised help but seem to have largely left Nagendranath to soldier on on his own.

When passing on the baton, Trailokyanath had insisted that Nagendranath buy up the unsold stock of the first volume for Rs 1000, and, this being no mean amount, Nagendranath had initially only been able to muster up half the sum. However, midway through the project the *Bishwakosh* began doing well financially. From volume 13 (1902), the Bishwakosh Press of Basu & Co. – evidently Nagendranath's own firm – had taken over the printing and publishing. By 1910 Nagendranath Basu had completed the 22-volume *Bangla Bishwakosh*, and between 1916 and 1931 he went on to prepare its 24-volume Hindi translation for the Varanasi-based Nagari Pracharini Sabha.[3]

[3] This section is entirely based on the English summary provided by Abhijit Gupta of the relevant pages from Nagendranath Basu, *Amar jiban-katha* (The Story of My Life), ed. Prabir Mukhopadhyay (Kolkata:

We know little about the reception history of Nagendranath Basu's efforts. But Sukumar Ray's doggerel on the encyclopaedia, in Sukanta Chaudhuri's superb translation, perhaps captures the reader's amazement at the newfangled compendium of knowledge.

> This book is crammed flowing with matters of weight:
> The right pecking order in bureaus of state,
> The way to cook chutney or steam a pilau,
> Of medical matters the wherefore and how.
> The making of toothpaste, of ink and of soap,
> With pujas and pundits the fit way to cope.
> Just one thing seems lacking to make it quite full:
> The best way to tackle a charging mad bull.[4]

There were at least four encyclopaedias in the Odia language before 1947.[5] The *Bangla Bishwakosh* was both a model and a challenge to these. If early efforts were spurred by the perceived inadequacy of a traditional language to capture modern, secular knowledge, the later endeavours showed a new national self-confidence. These encyclopaedias, moreover, consolidated an emerging sense of there being a distinct Odia identity.

Charchapad, n.d.), and Indra Mitra, *Rahasyalap* (Kolkata: Ananda, 2014), pp. 86–7.

[4] Chaudhuri (trans.), *The Select Nonsense of Sukumar Ray*, p. 27.

[5] This section on Odia encyclopaedias is entirely based on two essays by Jatindra Kumar Nayak: "Uses of General Knowledge", and "The Encyclopaedist as a Cold Warrior".

The earliest of the lot was Lala Madhav Lal's *Bibidha Sangraha* (1923), followed by Bhagirathi Mohapatra's *Ratnakosha* (1935). (The use of *bibidha* or *vividha*, meaning "various", "diverse", etc., and *biswa/viswa*, meaning "universal", "comprehensive", etc. to indicate the range, variety, and comprehensiveness of the exercise, is worthy of note.) Then there was Lala Nagendra Kumar Ray's more ambitious four-volume *Bibidha Ratna Sangraha* (1936), consisting of 429 entries, which was eleven years in the making, the year of its appearance coinciding with the formation of Orissa (now Odisha) as India's first separate linguistic province.

None of these encyclopaedias followed the alphabetic principle, they instead adopted the form of what is now often termed the "Companion", meaning a book of individual essays on specific topics pertinent to a large overarching subject. These were apparently "structured like a series of concentric circles, moving from the larger world to the smaller."[6] For instance, *Bibidha Ratna Sangraha* began by expatiating on the world, then proceeded to details of India, and finally acquainted readers with Orissa. Such pre-independence encyclopaedias also contained a lot that Orhan Pamuk calls "encyclopedic trivia".

It was not until the publication over 1963–5 of the four-volume *Sankhipta Odia Gyanakosha*, under the auspices of Utkal

[6] Nayak, "The Encyclopaedist as a Cold Warrior", p. 15.

University, that a modern compendium modelled on the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* appeared in Odia. Its editor was Dr Mayadhar Mansingh, a British-educated Shakespeare scholar who had conceived the project in the 1940s. Interestingly, over an investigative trip to the University of Madras he had familiarised himself with the ways in which Tamil and Telugu encyclopaedias were being compiled.

The publication of a modern encyclopaedia under an editor and a team funded by the state did not pre-empt individual efforts, such as one by Binode Kanungo titled *Jnanamandal* (roughly, World of Wisdom).[7] This Kanungo, though a school dropout, single-handedly published forty-two of the projected seventy-five volumes.

In Kannada the polymath K. Shivaram Karanth (1902–1997) similarly produced two different science encyclopaedias all by himself. Running into three Crown Quarto (*c.* 10 × 7.5 inches) volumes of some 1800 pages, *Bala Prapancha*, published in 1936–8 and meant for children, was the first such effort in Kannada. Karanth followed this with a four-volume science encyclopaedia, *Vijnana Prapancha* (1959–64).[8]

Unfortunately, there is very little by way of book history on such efforts, making it difficult to really comprehend their

[7] Kanungo, *A Dropout Teaches Himself*, provides an account of this effort.

[8] Ramachandran, *K. Shivarama Karanth*, p. 13.

scope and achievement. Shivaram Karanth's autobiography, fortunately translated into English as well, includes an account of how he went about producing his two encyclopaedias.[9] We learn from the autobiography of a man whose "habit is to act upon whatever I dream about", and in this case he dreamt of a source of knowledge for Kannada-speaking children. "If no one else benefited," he reassured himself, "at least I would have had occasion to educate myself." Though aware of Arthur Mee's *Children's Encyclopaedia*, he decided to model his project on *Pictorial Knowledge* (published by George Newnes Ltd, London). Rather than confine himself to the natural sciences, history, and literature, Karanth stretched his work to include economics, political thought, philosophy, and ethics. The encyclopaedia would be an introduction to knowledge, not its distillation. To accomplish his task, counterintuitively perhaps, he decided against roping in experts, for he reminded himself that "he lived in the Kannada country" – he could have well said India – where the scholars not only "lack[ed] any enthusiasm to write for neophytes," they often took six months to even acknowledge a letter. This, in brief, was a situation in which Karanth felt he would not reach the end of his work even if he "pushed back the date of my demise a thousand times."

[9] This entire section is based on K.S. Karanth, *Ten Faces of a Crazy Mind*, ch. 16, pp. 124–31.

It made good sense to write all the volumes himself. Selling off the rights to one of his bestselling earlier books, he raised some money and bought piles of books – a task much easier "than making pilgrimages to libraries". He wrote to agencies across the world soliciting material. Various foreign agencies obliged, whereas the Indian institutions were less responsive. Having decided he needed seclusion conducive to uninterrupted labour, he then holed himself up where he was sure to be marooned during the monsoons. Moving one subject at a time, he worked ten hours a day, wrote the main articles, and gave the final draft to a copyist who faired out his text.

Finding pictures to illustrate the volumes was the next challenge. Once again, he says, acquiring images from foreign organisations was easy, whereas getting photos from and on India was not. He therefore decided to shoot the images himself; armed with a camera he travelled across India and collected some three thousand pictures, of which a thousand he himself had shot. Only when the manuscript went to the press did the enormity of the project hit him.

The Mysore government offered to buy some copies despite murmurs against Mysore supporting the work of a Mangalorean, but not the Madras and Bombay governments – some Kannada-speaking areas lay within these presidencies before the formation of the modern linguistic state of Karnataka in 1956. Eventually the volumes, with a print run of 2000 copies,

were published in 1938 and priced Rs 36.00 a set. In the event it took more than eight years to exhaust the stock – from which "the Kannada country . . . should draw comfort", says Karanth wryly.

For anyone else this would have been a lifetime project. Karanth did an encore: twenty years later he embarked on a science encyclopaedia, *Vijnana Prapancha*. Planned to be in five volumes, he cut it down to four of 500 pages each. Aimed at early adolescents, the first three volumes were on the pure sciences while the last focused on the applied.

Karanth provides no details of sales or reception but on the finances tells us what he – like the headstrong others before him – seems not to have anticipated or feared before beginning work on the project. He had to sell his printing press in the process of producing his encyclopaedia and yet remained mired in debt. Luckily, this time some help was forthcoming from both state and central governments.

What is evident is that intellectually motivated individuals in colonial India, usually inspired by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, dreamt of replicating this monument to knowledge in their own languages, often against the greatest odds: paucity of financial resources, limited markets, absence of collaborators, lack of state patronage, the condescension or indifference of peers, and the ridicule of lesser minds. Producing encyclopaedias, apart from being a tool for language development, was

seen as part of the nation-building enterprise which developed a more concerted momentum after independence.

This short book is a history of the making of the ten-volume *Kalaikkalanjiyam*, the Tamil encyclopaedia, considered the first of its kind in any Indian language. Initiated in 1947, it was published between 1954 and 1963, with a final supplement and index volume following in 1968. Running into about 7500 pages, with contributions from well over a thousand individuals, it remains a landmark in Indian publishing.

If this encyclopaedia was conceived at the stroke of the midnight hour, by the time its last volume was published the Congress party had lost power in Tamilnadu and its ideological rival, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), had replaced it. The ideological and political undercurrents behind this change did not leave the project untouched. Based on hitherto untapped sources, this book reconstructs the story of the making of the *Kalaikkalanjiyam* – a saga with its own twists and turns, and many ups and downs.

1

Mission Impossible

Early Efforts

THE EARLIEST ATTEMPT at compiling a Tamil encyclopaedia of sorts was by Manipay A. Muttuthambi Pillai (1858–1917). Published in 1902, his *Abithana Kosham* with an English subtitle, "The Classical Tamil Dictionary", ran to about 400 pages in the Royal Octavo format (*c.* 6.5 × 10 inches). Arranged in "alphabetical order", it put together information from traditional religious and puranic texts as well as oral traditions. The objective was "to help in understanding old verses in their correct historical sense". Though Muttuthambi Pillai had laboured nearly sixteen years compiling this work, he was allegorically modest about the effort it had involved, saying that "while a pond was required, a small pheasant had tried to dig up a little hole." *Abithana Kosham* received the patronage of Sir Ponnambalam Coomaraswamy Mudaliar (1849–1906), a member of the distinguished Colombo-based political family (to which

the renowned art critic Ananda K. Coomaraswamy also belonged), who paid for the prospectus, while P. Pandithurai Thevar (1867–1911), Zamindar of Palavanatham and President of the Madurai Tamil Sangam, bought a hundred copies.[1] In fin-de-siècle India, as in Europe's cities a hundred years earlier, no major intellectual project was certain of success without recourse to patronage, and the viability of such projects was, as we shall see, often entirely dependent on its availability.[2]

A few years later, in 1908, it appears that one Ekkadu Rathnavelu Mudaliar, a Tamil pandit at the Madras Christian College, compiled various terms from Tamil and Sanskrit works to produce a *Sirappu Peyar Akarathi*.[3] Nothing further is known of his effort.

The *Abithana Chintamani*

The credit for launching the most ambitious project before the efforts of A. Muttuthambi Pillai and Ekkadu Rathnavelu Mudaliar must surely go to A. Singaravelu Mudaliar (1855–1931), a Tamil pandit who worked at various schools managed by the Pachaiyappa's Trust, Chennai. He began his pioneering

[1] Muttuthambi Pillai, *Abithana Kosham*, Preface. All translations from Tamil are by the author.

[2] For more on patronage and book-publishing, see Venkatachalapathy, *The Province of the Book*, ch. 1.

[3] Thooran, "Tamil Kalaikkalanjiyangal", p. 147.

Johnsonian task of organising an encyclopaedia as early as 1890, confining himself to collecting and writing entries that were primarily connected with Tamil literature. His conception of literature was not, however, restricted by the narrow Enlightenment view of it; Singaravelu Mudaliar's was an epistemologically broader pre-colonial understanding of the word. His projected volume thus intended to encompass

> Biographical sketches of deities, saints and other personages; Descriptive and explanatory notes on places of sanctity and antiquity; Explanations of allusions to Hindu mythology; Grammar, Literature and Logic; Genealogical, Geographical and Historical facts; Dissertations on different systems of philosophy and religion; Description of the birth and growth of Hindu sects and creeds that are extant; Genealogy of the principal characters that figure in our annals; Origin of precious stones; Physiognomy, Astrology and Medicine; History of illustrious Tamil Authors and Madathipathies [pontiffs of Hindu monasteries] and many other items interesting to the student of Tamil literature and the antiquarian.[4]

Singaravelu Mudaliar gleaned the information on these topics from "classic authorities, Puranas, Srutis and Smritis", as well as from the newly rediscovered Sangam literary texts which had

[4] Singaravelu Mudaliar, *Abithana Chintamani*, English preface to the first edition, 1910, p. v. Much of this section is based on the Tamil and English prefaces that Singaravelu Mudaliar wrote to his magnum opus and the Introduction to the second edition written by his son A. Sivaprakasa Mudaliar.

begun to find their way into the world of Tamil print. He confessed in his Preface that his enterprise, which had started out as mere pastime, soon consumed all his time and resources. What required team work, he said, had had to be executed by individual effort. The information he collected he first jotted down in a *vade mecum*, and later wrote up as separate entries. Subsequently he copied these out in alphabetic order – no mean task, considering that the "*Abithana Chintamani*, the Encyclopaedia of Tamil Literature", as it was titled, ran into 131 formes of Royal Quarto pages in small pica type without the customary "leading" – the space between successive lines of type. The task, not surprisingly, exhausted him.

Singaravelu Mudaliar's travails when seeing his work through the press cohere into a familiar story with many parallels across colonial India. The publication of such a volume being beyond the means of any individual, much less a low-paid Tamil pandit, he took his bulky manuscript to various scholars of repute, only to receive mixed responses of encouragement and discouragement.[5] V. Kanakasabhai Pillai, a government official and renowned author of *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*, commended his effort when describing it as "written in a simple and easy style, and presented for the first time in the form of an Encyclopaedia." Professor Seshagiri Sastri, by contrast, seemed inclined to

[5] On the status of Tamil pandits in colonial Tamilnadu, see Venkatachalapathy, "From Pulavar to Professor".

throw a spanner in the works on the scarcely relevant grounds that he himself was engaged in a similar enterprise.[6] When Singaravelu Mudaliar approached V. Krishnamachari, a trustee of the Pachaiyappa's Trust – a philanthropic organisation with a stellar track record of supporting native education – Krishnamachari stated the obvious: it would cost a lot to publish the encyclopaedia. Why else would I be approaching you is the thought we might justifiably position in Singaravelu Mudaliar's mind at this juncture. The hoped-for patron's unhelpful silence on the obvious solution made the author obtain estimates of costs from the printers, who only deepened his gloom.

Undeterred, Singaravelu Mudaliar then issued a prospectus, accompanied by specimen pages, to garner public help in publishing the encyclopaedia as fascicules. Only about two dozen public figures responded with a subscription for a copy each.[7] The less-than-enthusiastic response to the prospectus dampened his spirits further. When he had all but given up hope, Panditharai Thevar, whom we encountered earlier as a patron of *Abithana Kosham* and who had chanced upon the prospectus, appeared like the proverbial fairy godmother and offered to publish the

[6] Singaravelu Mudaliar, *Abithana Chintamani* (1934), pp. iv, vii.

[7] See "Opinions" appended to the second edition. After the volume appeared, the Government of Madras bought nine copies (not even a round figure of ten!), while the Madras School Book and Literary Society, a Christian Missionary organisation, most generously gave a substantial cheque of Rs 400 as a grant.

Fig. 1.1: A. Singaravelu Mudaliar

Abithana Chintamani. Trained scribes were set to work copying the manuscript, and in 1910 the patron had it printed under Singaravelu Mudaliar's supervision at the Vyjayanthi Press, Madras, while the volume itself was published under the imprint of the Madurai Tamil Sangam.[8]

The presumably overjoyed author did not long rest on his laurels post-publication, for, some years later, he began the challenging task of revision. Assembling new entries newly noticed for their absence and reorganising the text, he had embarked on a second edition and read the proofs of about a thousand pages of the eventual 1650 pages when he fell ill and died in November 1931 at the age of seventy-six. The task of seeing it through now fell on his son, A. Sivaprakasa Mudaliar, who finally published it in 1934 under the imprint of a textbook publisher, C. Coomaraswami Naidu & Sons.[9]

The *Abithana Chintamani*, as its contents indicate, was far from what the colonial middle-class intelligentsia would consider an encyclopaedia. As a reviewer of the later *Kalaikkalanjiyam* – the subject of the present book – remarked, "Is it any wonder that

[8] Ibid., pp. v, viii.

[9] It is said that the second edition of *Abithana Chintamani* remained unsold for many years. In 1988 the New Delhi-based press, Asian Educational Services, resurrected it by publishing a facsimile edition (in a reduced Demy Octavo – 5.5 × 8.5 inches – format), making it more easily and widely available. Since then it has been continuously in print and been cloned by more than one publisher.

the scientific wonders of the twentieth century find no place in *Abithana Chintamani*."[10] However, even though it was not a "modern" and secular repository of "useful knowledge", the *Abithana Chintamani* loomed large as the *fons et origo* for such an encyclopaedia. If nothing else, it awakened the best Tamil minds to the need for a modern tome of this variety in their language. Periyar E.V. Ramaswamy relied extensively on the *Abithana Chintamani* for his rationalist critique of religion: it is said that he thumbed through it whenever he found himself with a little free time. He is known to have gifted an inscribed copy of it to his future wife, Maniammai, when she was his personal assistant. This unromantic present is of a piece with his arch-rationalist personality.

When the founder of the DMK, C.N. Annadurai, was incarcerated in 1938 during the first anti-Hindi agitation, he is known to have carried a copy of the same encyclopaedia to the jail. T.P. Meenakshisundaram, the renowned scholar and linguist who contributed extensively to the making of the *Kalaikkalanjiyam*, said that reading it in his boyhood days spurred him on towards what turned out to be a dazzling intellectual journey. In sum, the devotion of Tamil intellectuals of the day to this voluminous work is clear from the fact that, despite its considerable bulk, they saw it as worth carrying for its reliable companionship.

[10] Anbazhagan, "Kalanjiya Pani".

Soon after the publication of the *Abithana Chintamani*, there were reports that the philanthropist M.Ct. Pethachi Chettiar (1889–1924), Zamindar of Andipatti, had committed Rs 4000 for the production of a *Tamil Nool Vilakkam* (lit. a descriptive account of Tamil books) modelled on the lines of – what else but – the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. It was also reported that Ra. Raghavaiyangar, a prominent Tamil pandit, was to steer the venture. But nothing more was heard of this project.[11]

Some months later, one C.S. Krishna Aiyar, M.A., and another, M.V. Ishwar Ayyar, calling themselves editors of "A Tamil Cyclopaedia", wrote from Coimbatore to the editor of the *Hindu*. "In spite of the slender encouragement that the vernaculars received at the hands of the [Madras] University," they noted "the output is large," signalling that "the time . . . to take stock of the existing works including fugitive works" (it is not clear what they meant by the latter) had come. A cyclopaedia, apart from giving "direction to authors to avoid well-worn hackneyed subjects", would also be a service to posterity. The editors proposed to include "essays on the chief periods of Tamil literature and some other subjects bearing on Tamil literature in general with a few illustrative examples." The volume was to contain as much biographical detail as possible. Correspondents were encouraged to share information on poets from their region and send in publications "neatly packed for notice in the

[11] *Vivekodayam*, 1 (7), August 1916.

cyclopaedia", generous remuneration to contributors having been promised.[12]

It should come as no surprise that nothing came of this other than gratuitous advice from a correspondent a week later. One Sivadhyananda, writing from Coonoor, said the legal luminary P.S. Sivaswami Iyer had wanted to commission such a volume under (an already overworked scholarly editor) U.V. Swaminatha Iyer; he added that it would subsequently be translated into English by a university teacher. He recommended that the editors of the Tamil Cyclopaedia produce "an exhausting [*sic*] work" on the lines of the *Chamber's Encyclopaedia of English Literature*, and helpfully added the name of a few scholars who could contribute.[13]

In the 1920s P.V. Manicka Nayagar, an engineer by profession and a leading light of the Non-Brahmin movement, as well as Suddhananda Bharati – poet, translator, and disciple of Aurobindo – entertained a similar dream.[14] The idea of producing encyclopaedias in the vernacular languages had taken off and grown seductive. Whatever freedoms Indian intellectuals may or may not have had under British rule, it seems they were entirely free to dream of producing massive encyclopaedias.

[12] The *Hindu*, 24 October 1916.

[13] The *Hindu*, 31 October 1916.

[14] Suddhananda Bharati to Periaswamy Thooran, 6 December 1948, P. Thooran Papers.

Their encyclopaedic impulse, if it can be termed so, seems at one level the stray desire within certain individuals in favour of a grand scheme that would map the entire range of literary and related intellection within a regional language. At another level it was connected to the nationalist fervour of the time and the related need to assert a long cultural and philosophical heritage peculiar to a specific people. To create an encylopaedia was to certify the possession of a large literary tradition and an intellectual history – the mark of civilisation in and civilisational pride for a language.

Sambasivam Pillai's Magnificent Obsession

In the 1930s a lowly clerk in the police department, T.V. Sambasivam Pillai (1880–1953) embarked on compiling what would become *A Tamil–English Dictionary of Medicine, Chemistry, Botany and Allied Sciences*. Though misleadingly titled a dictionary, this was in fact encyclopaedic in its extent, range, and depth, running eventually into five volumes of 4000 pages and 80,000 entries. The first two volumes were published in 1938 but Sambasivam Pillai fell on hard times and could not complete his project. Fifteen years later he died before even half of his dictionary had been printed – the printed formes of his massive tome lay stretched and unbound even as he, stretched and bound on a bier, was carried off for his last ceremonies. How these printed

formes and the manuscript of the remaining volumes were retrieved and the dictionary ultimately saw the light of day reads like a Greek tragedy.

Sambasivam Pillai's medical dictionary remains an achievement unsurpassed to this day. Not only is it celebrated in the annals of Siddha medicine, it remains in current use by practitioners. The Tamil etymological dictionary by the iconic linguist G. Devaneya Pavanar is littered with references to this illustrious predecessor and many of the headwords in the later work draw their etymology, definition, and English equivalents from it. Pavanar says "Sambasivam Pillai's Tamil–English dictionary stands next only to the Madras University *Tamil Lexicon* in terms of its usefulness," adding for good measure that "its value for a knowledge of medicine cannot be overstated."[15]

Sambasivam Pillai's dictionary encompasses anatomy, pathology, diagnosis, aetiology, pharmacology, philosophy, alchemy, magic, and many other fields – modern and secular as well as premodern and religious. Though primarily a medical dictionary, it is a work of reference that attests to the achievements of the Tamils and the richness of their language. Despite being conceived as a dictionary, the elaboration of the headwords often takes on the form of an encyclopaedia (e.g. *"avuri"* – dyers' indigo; *"kadi"* – vinegar). The entries under certain headwords, such as *"aushada*

[15] Pavanar, *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Tamil Language*, vol. 1, pt 1, p. 6.

vaguppu" (medicinal classes), raise the work to a treatise on such subjects. A large number of headwords carry elaborate footnotes, and the many entries for various medicinal herbs read like a *materia medica.*

Sambasivam Pillai's headwords include a number of classes and categories. For instance, he lists twelve types of *"athi"* (common mountain ebony) and twenty-three types of *"sanku"* (chank). He lists scores of words with the prefix *"pei"*. His enumeration of over a score varieties of pulse beats represents testimony of the diagnostic range of Siddha medicine. His dictionary also provides elaborately classified information on herbs and plants.

The detailed definitions in Tamil are accompanied by pithy definitions and synonyms in English. To cite just one instance, take *"thikaippundu"*, a herb that causes disorientation if trodden on: while the *Tamil Lexicon* describes the sensation as "bewilderment", Sambasivam Pillai more aptly calls it "being stupefied". Sambasivam Pillai was also the first, even before the renowned naturalist M. Krishnan (of whom more later), to identify the *"kavariman"* mentioned in such works as the classic *Tirukkural*, the Tamil book of aphorisms for all occasions. This *kavariman* had been described as chimerical, inasmuch as it was considered an animal which perished upon shedding its hair, rendering it useful as a metaphor for the preference of death to dishonour. Sambasivam Pillai, showing the common sense of the naturalist, identified it as the Tibetan Yak. He also provides, to a great extent, Latin scientific names in the Linnaean binomial classificatory system,

this being no mean achievement. What the historian D.D. Kosambi says of Sanskrit medicinal texts seems applicable to many of those used by Sambasivam Pillai as well:

> Sanskrit [technical] terminology is anything but precise. The Sanskrit plant-name *ananta* ("without end") is used in medical treatises of no less than fourteen different species, from a foot-high leguminous shrub to a Rubiaceous tree. This . . . shows how Indian science degenerated into secret disciplines. Most of the fourteen plants are in use to this day. Every Ayurvedic physician maintains that his is *the* real *ananta*, the next man (who treats the same disease by a totally different *ananta* plant) an ignorant quack.[16]

In this epistemological context of imprecision verging on fakery, Sambasivam Pillai's identification of herbs and plants is as impressive as his no-nonsense matter-of-factness in marking many items as "unknown" and "unidentified".

However, we are impoverished for information about this man who produced such a rich encyclopaedia. The available biographical details on Thanjavur Vilvaiyamannaiyar Sambasivam Pillai are tantalisingly brief and fragmentary.[17] His familial origins were

[16] Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, p. 283.

[17] Even for these bits of information we owe much to his nephew (Sambasivam Pillai's younger brother's son) A. Rajabhushanam Mannaiyar. See his biography, *Siddha Maruthuva Medhai T.V. Sambasivam Pillai*. I also interviewed him on 12 December 2006 in Chennai.

in the village of Kammanthankudi in the Papanasam division of Thanjavur district, and he himself was born in Bangalore to Vilvaiyamannaiyar and Manonmani-ammal. His education, which did not extend beyond high school, was also in Bangalore. An outbreak of plague in 1899 caused the family to move to Ammapettai near Thanjavur. Later, he joined the Police Commissioner's Office in Chennai as a clerk, and in 1907 was promoted to the rank of sub-inspector. In 1903 he was married to Duraikkannu, niece of S. Bhavanandam Pillai, the first Indian Deputy Commissioner of Police in the Madras Presidency and a Tamil scholar in his own right. Following the death of his wife in 1914, Sambasivam Pillai married Ammani in 1916; she died in the same year in childbirth. That he had no direct heir was to have its own fallout for his project. In 1935 he retired as an Inspector. This sketchy biography reveals little about the genius behind the dictionary.

In the first fascicule of his work, published in 1931, Sambasivam Pillai says

> The idea of compiling this work suggested itself to me for the first time some years ago when I happened to peruse some unique treatises of medicine found written by my grandfather. The several code words, technical terms and phraseology found in the work made it extremely difficult for me to decipher the meanings of several portions in it especially in the absence of any book or books of reference.

However, his nephew Rajabhushanam Mannaiyar states that, to the best of his knowledge, his family had no tradition of medicine. The community into which Sambasivam Pillai was born – the Kallar of Thanjavur, who were predominantly landholding and agricultural – had little connection with medicine. It is therefore curious for Sambasivam Pillai to mention medical treatises – they were presumably palm-leaf manuscripts – written by his grandfather. His staggering achievement could scarcely have been mere happenstance, but its intellectual antecedents remain a mystery. Considering that he did not so much as step into a college, the grasp of the English language that his dictionary demonstrates is remarkable.

The sketchy biographical information we possess does not give us much clue about Sambasivam Pillai's ideological makeup either. The short Preface to the specimen fascicule of the first volume (1931) and the elaborate Introduction running into 114 pages in fine print – both written in English, from which I quote in extenso in this section – is the only source that outlines the intellectual underpinnings of his project. The long Introduction begins:

> It was my intention to write an introduction only on the completion of the entire work; but it occurred to me that, in a peculiarly technical and unique work like this, all the characteristic features shown and the methods pursued in giving the meanings, furnishing explanatory notes here and there in the derivative origins and the like have all necessarily to be elucidated at the outset without waiting

> for the whole work to be completed, so as to save all the possible difficulties of the users of this work; and it is this uncommon aspect of this work that has impelled me to offer this introduction even along with this first volume.[18]

This is possibly the only fortuitous element in the whole enterprise. Had Sambasivam Pillai postponed writing his Preface to the last volume, the only surviving document enabling an understanding of the making of this dictionary would not have existed.

Why did Sambasivam Pillai embark on this project at all? His primary motivation seems to have been the fairly standard one for virtually every intellectual undertaking in colonial India – the sense of a lack, the feeling of an absence that needed remedying:

> . . . a correct and complete Tamil–English dictionary of the Indian Medical Science has been a desideratum in our country from a very long time. Therefore, it is that an attempt has now been made by me to compile and publish such a work on lines similar to those of M/s Winslow, Rottler, Spaulding and others.[19]

It was this lacuna that Sambasivam Pillai was attempting to fill, an intellectual vacuum brought to light by the encounter with

[18] Sambasivam Pillai, *A Tamil–English Dictionary of Medicine*, Introduction.

[19] Preface to specimen fascicule, *A Tamil–English Dictionary of Medicine*. Myron Winslow, J.P. Rottler, and Rev. L. Spaulding were all lexicographers who compiled important Tamil dictionaries.

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Western knowledge, in tandem with a deep sense of pride about the glory of Tamil and the people who spoke it.

Sambasivam Pillai had little doubt that "The superiority of Tamil over the other languages need not be over-emphasized here," for "the Tamilians were not only the earliest civilized but those who made more considerable progress in civilization than any other early people."[20] He himself was very much a product of what has been called the "Tamil Renaissance", an intellectual formation that was the product of colonial transformation in Tamil society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As we shall see, this was the context for much of Tamil scholarship and was to impact every intellectual effort, the *Kalaikkalanjiyam* not excepted.

While he was steeped in a milieu that drew from the pre-colonial antagonism between Tamil and Sanskrit, Sambasivam Pillai was also familiar with the new Orientalist knowledge. His Introduction refers to the work of Max Müller, among others, and invokes the theory of the Dravidian family of languages elaborated by Robert Caldwell which established that Tamil was independent of Sanskrit. Modern medical thought had not passed him by either. Condemning medical science in India for being "purely associated with Religion and Philosophy," he asserted that "A system of medicine without understanding

[20] The source for the following paragraphs is Sambasivam Pillai, *A Tamil–English Dictionary of Medicine*, vol. 1, Introduction.

and without a true knowledge of natural laws will . . . remain a system of mere opinions, superstitions, and of passive observation and inactivity and this is the fate of the indigenous systems of medicine in the present day." He therefore argued that "unless these systems are thoroughly overhauled through research, our physicians will seldom cure a serious or chronic ailment."

Sambasivam Pillai argued that Indian systems of medicine – Ayurveda, Unani, and Siddha – were all based on "humoral pathology", or in other words "on the same physiological doctrine, that air, bile and phlegm are the three supports of the body. They advocate that without these three humours, the individual could not exist and that if they get deranged, diseases or death will be the result." In sum, if humans were the microcosm, the universe was the macrocosm.

Sambasivam Pillai identified Siddha as the Tamil system of medicine – as against Ayurveda identified with Sanskrit – based on the knowledge created by ancient sages (Siddhas).[21] In the explication of his ideas about medicine he demonstrates a close understanding of Western notions of the subject, situating his narrative of the history of Tamil medicine in relation to non-Tamil systems as well as its analogous history in

[21] For more on the Siddha system and its relationship with Ayurveda, see Weiss, *Recipes for Immortality*.

the West. Comparing Indian/Tamil achievements in ancient chemistry with those in the West, he remarks on "the high proficiency, unparalleled knowledge and uncommon development which the Siddhars had attained in this branch of science from very ancient times and even at such a remote period as that when Europe was completely immersed in ignorance and barbarism."

> [T]his peculiarly unique Lexicon of Indian Medicine issues forth into life as the rarest of its kind in the extensive field of India's Medical Renaissance pulsating with the highest possibilities of human growth and welfare hitherto almost unknown to the world and re-establishing the glory of India as the only regenerated safety centre for the world's progressive perennial peace and prosperity.

Using Western epistemological methods, Sambasivam Pillai was arguing that the Siddha or Tamil system was superior to other medical systems. However, the esoteric vocabulary and versification ("often symbolic and cryptic") used by the Siddhas had made it difficult to access the content of their learning and posed the problem of attuning it to modern needs. Using modern methods of classification and lexicography, therefore, Sambasivam Pillai alphabetically reordered the bewildering range of information contained in the Siddha texts.

It is not clear when Sambasivam Pillai embarked on this lifetime exercise. In 1938 he says his "task of the gathering of materials

extend[ed] over well-nigh a quarter of a century." He may therefore have begun working in earnest at the start of the 1910s, when he was in his thirties.

He lacked adequate reference materials for his work and seems to have toiled in the midst of pressing duties at his workplace. ("I sat at it during midnight hours.") Since his acknowledgements page is bereft of names, in all likelihood he laboured alone. Enterprises such as his are often the obsessive work of possessed men. He is unlikely to have had interlocutors, conversational peers, and assistance of the kind routine in the making of large reference projects today. Considering the complete absence of obituary or memoir, Sambasivam Pillai was almost certainly a lonely man who did not socialise much.

The publication of the lexicon, the product of his work over a quarter of a century – a "labour of love extending through all his active periods of his wakeful life" as he himself noted in the third person – is a story of tragic proportions.

His manuscript complete, Sambasivam Pillai tested the waters with a specimen fascicule of forty pages that he probably first published in 1931. The specimen also contained a four-page index in English. Whether the fascicule was intended as a specimen to invite comments, or an advertisement, or a prospectus, or a combination of these for the grand publication project is not known. However, the opinions that it elicited – from literary and lexicographical figures such

as U.V. Swaminatha Iyer, S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, S. Anavaradavinayakam Pillai, and K. Subramania Pillai, and from medical personalities such as Dr A. Lakshmanaswamy Mudaliar and Dr T.S. Thirumurthy – were later printed in an eight-page supplement and appended to the specimen fascicule.

Following this Sambasivam Pillai published in the same year a 200-page fascicule with headwords from "*A*" to "*Amuda*". Both the specimen and the fascicule were published under the imprint of "The Research Institute of Siddhar's Science, Madras". No doubt they were self-published and the institution was only a fig leaf on a letter pad.

In his Preface Sambasivam Pillai tells us the projected dictionary will run into four volumes of 500 pages each. In the event, as noted earlier, the posthumous volumes, touching 4000 pages, were double the anticipated number.

To meet the printing costs Sambasivam Pillai sold two *velis* (about thirteen acres) of his ancestral land, presumably high yielding and fertile on account of its location in the Kaveri delta, and spent a further Rs 12,000 that he received in commutation of his pension.[22] This went towards funding the first two volumes, which were published in late 1938 (the Introduction is dated 30 December) or early 1939. It appears that, later, the universities of Madras and Mysore provided a grant of Rs 5000

[22] Mannaiyar, *Siddha Maruthuva Medhai T.V. Sambasivam Pillai*, p. 49. This figure is too high and is probably incorrect.

Fig. 1.2: T.V. Sambasivam Pillai

of the dictionary as well as many printed formes. The formes went up to page 2174 of the third volume. Along with these papers lay a file containing Sambasivam Pillai's final school certificate, with his younger brother T.V. Annamalai Pillai's address jotted on it. Subbiah Pillai traced the brother to Thanjavur, and with his help located Sambasivam Pillai's employee identity card; the only surviving photograph we have of this neglected compiler comes from this card.[24]

With Subbiah Pillai's intercession, the manuscripts and printed formes of the medical dictionary were taken to the Government Siddha Medical College in Anna Nagar, Madras. With the active assistance of Dr P.V. Venugopal, director of the college, the remaining part of the third volume was printed with government assistance.[25] This happened at some point between 1972 and 1977. The first editions of the first three volumes currently available in libraries seem to have been bound over these dates. I have been unable to trace the first two volumes in their original 1938 binding.

Bureaucratic procedures delayed the printing of the remaining part of the third volume and its publication, frustrating Subbiah Pillai. Luckily this languishing project tickled the fancy of G.D. Naidu, a maverick scientist and industrialist at Coimbatore, who generously decided to bankroll it. The

[24] Pillai, "Padam Thokuthalil Pattarivu".

[25] Ibid.

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[25] Ibid.

printing of the last two volumes was then taken up in earnest at the industrialist's own printing press. But it would seem justifiable to suggest that the hex on this long-drawn affair became manifest once more, for by the time the publication was finally through at the G.D. Naidu Charities, G.D. Naidu himself was dead. All the same, at least the monumental work of Sambasivam Pillai, which had consumed a quarter of a century's authorial labour, had come to fruition after half a century.

Inevitably perhaps, by the time the last three of the five volumes were printed and bound much editorial confusion had occurred. The first editions that I consulted in various repositories had newly printed formes bound along with the formes originally printed in Sambasivam Pillai's time. The title pages had been printed anew and pasted in. Confused perhaps by the specimen fascicule circulated by Sambasivam Pillai, the title pages invariably give the date of publication as 1931 rather than the actual year of publication, 1938/9. Further, one copy of the second volume had pages 930–1488 from Sambasivam Pillai's time and the rest (pages 1489–1752) printed at the press where the G.D. Naidu Charities had printed the fourth and fifth volumes. From this we may surmise that, at the time of Sambasivam Pillai's death, the many printed formes that lay unbound were later used to complete the bound volumes.

The history of Tamil literature is replete with tales of death, devastation, tsunamis, conflagrations, and termites. But even by

the extraordinary standards of Tamil misfortune, the ill luck that went so constantly hand in hand with T.V. Sambasivam Pillai's *A Tamil–English Dictionary of Medicine, Chemistry, Botany and Allied Sciences* puts this project right up there on the Olympian heights of books blighted by the kiss of death. This monumental achievement monumentally jinxed has never been given its due by the world of scholarship. A 900-page history of Tamil lexicography published in 2000 mentions Sambasivam Pillai's dictionary only twice![26] This chapter of mine could therefore be read as partial and belated restitution, a tribute to the sheer nobility of an intellectual effort so long unrecognised.

Coda

The bad luck that ran as a spinal cord through Sambasivam Pillai's medical encyclopaedia over the lifetime of its author and supporters did not wither after their death either. For long out of print, it was reprinted in the 1990s by the Directorate (later Department) of Indian Medicine and Homoeopathy, Government of Tamilnadu – an institution that might be seen as the dubious exemplar of precisely how *not* to publish books. While the original dictionary, though printed over five decades, was uniformly printed in five volumes in Royal Octavo with continuous pagination, the new "edition" is in six volumes of varying sizes. The first volume, recomposed with innumerable

[26] James, *Colporul*. See my review of this book, "Monumental Scholarship", *The Indian Review of Books*, Nov.–Dec. 2000.

typographic errors, runs to 1742 pages. The second volume, thankfully perhaps, is a photo-offset reproduction, even if of poor quality, of the first edition – but the pagination runs from 929 to 1752! The third volume, also a facsimile reproduction, runs mercifully from page 1753 to 2224. The fourth volume, for reasons unstated, is split into two parts and recomposed anew, the pagination now starting afresh from 1 to 1020, the second part continuing this pagination to 2000. The newly typeset fifth volume has fresh pagination. Considering this is a medical text, practitioners may use it only at their own peril, given the appalling typesetting and proofreading. The production quality in other respects is in sweet harmony with the lacklustre pre-press work on the text, so that the result has the look of fired bricks rather than books.

In 2014, Tamil Perayam of S.R.M. University began republishing Sambasivam Pillai's encyclopaedia: on this occasion, meddling with the text involved the unwarranted substitution of pure Tamil words for Sanskrit ones, revision of the language, and the correction of supposed grammatical errors!

Apparently, there seems to be no end to the travails suffered by Sambasivam Pillai's encyclopaedia. Perhaps it is just as well that he did not live to see the final plight which befell his encyclopaedic devotions.

2

"If Not Us, Who Else?"

GIVEN THE various problems and tragic outcomes that beset all the early efforts to arrive at a modern encyclopaedia, the project remained no more than many a Tamil enthusiast's dream. As late as 1933, in a subjects committee meeting of the Tamil Anbar Mahanadu (Tamil Enthusiasts' Conference) – which ultimately turned out controversial for by then a clear ideological cleavage over how Tamil was to develop had emerged[1] – a resolution was passed: "Res. No 6. This conference resolved that it is imperative to publish an encyclopaedia (*pal porul vilakka nool*) in Tamil. Proposed by C.N. Muthuranga Mudaliar. Seconded by V.S. Venkataramaiyer."[2]

But the cue was not taken until 1947.

[1] For an interpretive account of the controversies surrounding this conference, see Venkatachalapathy, "Coining Words".

[2] *Tamil Anbar Mahanadu.*

T.S. Chokkalingam, the doyen of Tamil journalism, reminisces that T.S. Avinashilingam Chettiar, the impresario behind the *Kalaikkalanjiyam*, first broached the idea when they were lodged in the Cuddalore prison in 1932, during the Civil Disobedience Movement.[3] M.P. Periaswamy Thooran, who became Chief Editor of the Tamil encyclopaedia, was a rival claimant to the credit for this idea. In an interview to a literary monthly in 1966, he said even as a college student he had been inspired by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*; and that he had shared the idea with Avinashilingam during the First Tamil Writers' Conference at Coimbatore in 1944, when the latter had promised he would look into it. Thooran adds that, in 1947, during the second conference at Chennai, he called upon the government to launch a Tamil encyclopaedia project, whereupon Avinashilingam, then the education minister of Madras Province, chided him for always looking up to the government without exploring what private initiative might achieve.[4]

At this time the idea was to cull a wide selection of entries – running to about 10,000 pages – from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and translate them into Tamil by engaging about fifty bilingual writers. To actually produce a Tamil encyclopaedia from scratch was apparently inconceivable.[5] Initially, therefore,

[3] Chokkalingam, *Enathu Muthal Santippu*, p. 77.

[4] Thooran, "Interview".

[5] In 2007, the Ananda Vikatan media group published such a selection in Tamil: three volumes in 3500 pages.

neither Avinashilingam nor Thooran had conceptualised an original Tamil encyclopaedia. But there is little doubt that from this acorn – of publishing an abridged Tamil translation of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* – sprang the oak of the Tamil encyclopaedia. Ultimately, at the stroke of the midnight hour when India kept its tryst with destiny, the Tamil encyclopaedia project was hatched. The moving spirit behind it was T.S. Avinashilingam Chettiar (1903–1991).[6]

Tiruppur Subramaniam Avinashilingam Chettiar was born in Tiruppur. Barely 40 km east of Coimbatore, Tiruppur was a nondescript town, a very far cry from the hosiery capital it became in the late twentieth century. Avinashilingam's father was a successful merchant and banker, his mother a deeply religious woman. The family was known for its philanthropy. After his schooling in Coimbatore, Avinashilingam went to Pachaiyappa's College, Chennai, and then pursued law. In Chennai, his meeting with two of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's disciples, Brahmananda and Shivananda, proved a turning point. Avinashilingam, having apprenticed as a lawyer, lost interest in the profession after a few years. In 1930 he started an orphanage and school which grew into the Ramakrishna Vidyalaya and branched into various institutions of higher education through the century.

[6] Bharati, *Arivu Chudar Ettriya Avinashilinga Perunthagai*. The information provided in the present short book is scanty and inadequate. I have pieced together this biographical note based on his autobiography (Avinashilingam, *The Sacred Touch*) and other sources.

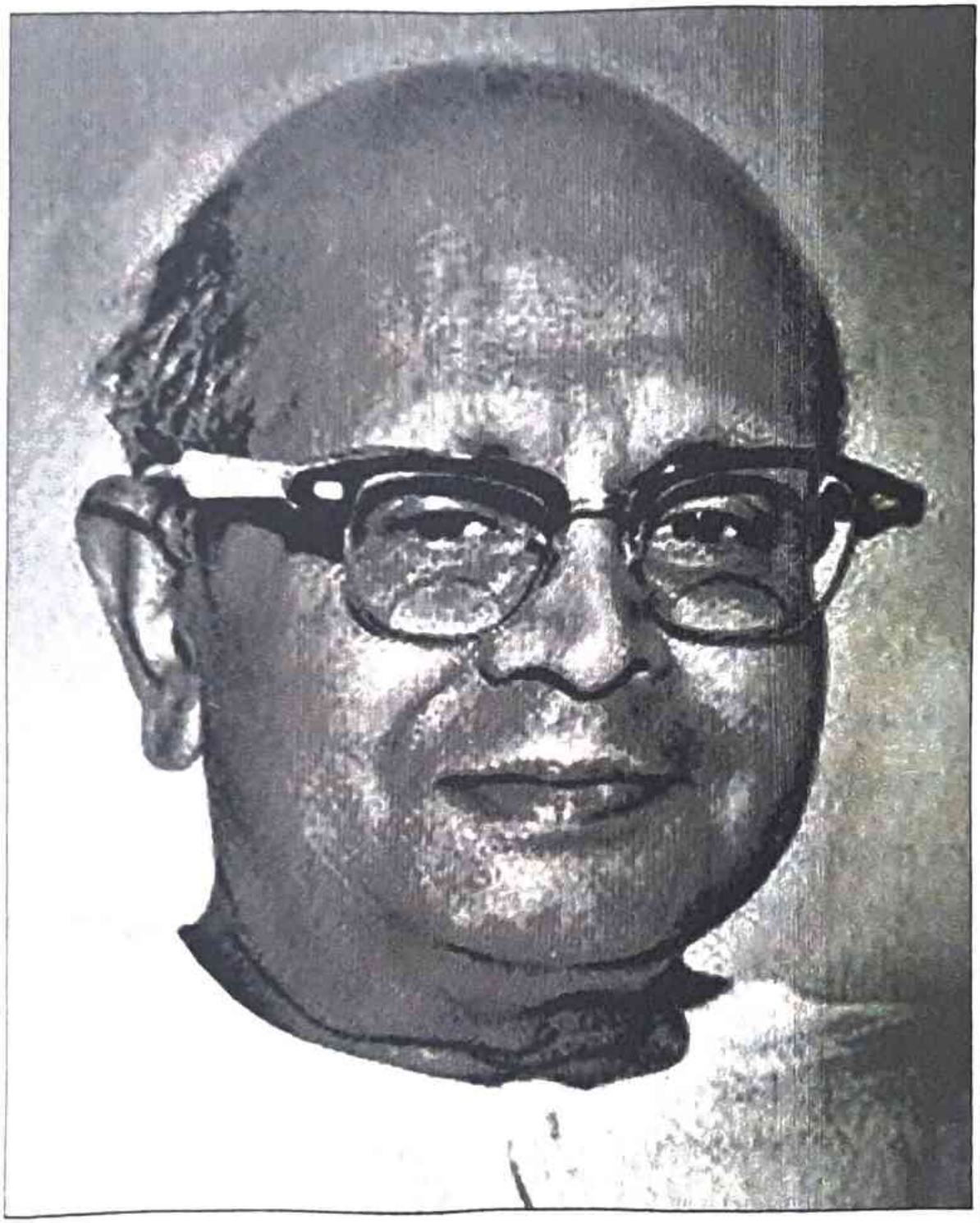

Fig. 2.1: T.S. Avinashilingam

Shortly after he had established the school, Avinashilingam was forced by circumstance to plunge into direct political activity. As a student in Chennai he had attended the massive Satyagraha meeting on the Marina Beach in 1920. He had also met Gandhi in Tiruppur in 1926, and, not surprisingly for a young man so imbued with idealism, was soon caught in the Mahatma's web. In April 1930, when news reached him of police brutality on the peaceful Dandi Salt Satyagraha volunteers and Gandhi's arrest, Avinashilingam could not resist breaking the salt laws himself. Promptly arrested, he was sentenced to six months' rigorous imprisonment. Two years later he was incarcerated again for participating in the Civil Disobedience movement. Two more spells in jail followed – in 1941, as part of the Individual Satyagraha, and then again during the Quit India movement.

In 1934, Avinashilingam was elected to the Central Legislative Assembly, humbling his heavyweight opponent R.K. Shanmukham Chetty. Interestingly, perhaps even ironically, as the first finance minister of independent India Shanmukham Chetty would later approve funding for the Tamil encyclopaedia project.

Avinashilingam's stint in prison facilitated the forging of many lifelong friendships among fellow nationalists. It also gave him the time and solitude to read deeply into ethical and religious texts, including the *Tirukkural*, Kamban's *Ramayanam*, and the writings of Vivekananda. In 1946 he became the minister for

education of Madras Province in T. Prakasam's cabinet, a position he held until 1949 in Omandur P. Ramaswamy Reddiar's government. These were eventful years during which he tried to give concrete shape to nationalist ideas regarding the development of Indian languages – Tamil most specifically. He speeded up the work of coining technical terms in Tamil, streamlined the service rules and salary structure of Tamil teachers – giving them pay parity with other teachers – and enhanced the budgetary allocation for schools. An unprecedented measure to nationalise the copyright of Subramania Bharati – the first in the global history of copyright – so that the works of this iconic poet would be freely available, was also steered through the bureaucratic process by Avinashilingam.[7] However, his move to introduce compulsory Hindi in schools, and some of his statements in connection with it, earned the wrath of an ascendant Dravidian movement and resulted in implications for the *Kalaikkalanjiyam*, as we shall soon see. Overall, nonetheless, Avinashilingam's reputation for scrupulous honesty, organisational skills, and taskmasterly toughness were what saw him through. He was a man known not to rest until the goal on which he had set his mind was achieved.

These were virtues severely tested in the ensuing process of producing the encyclopaedia.

[7] This story is narrated and analysed in Venkatachalapathy, *Who Owns That Song?*

3

Passing the Hat Around

Moving on from the question of who actually first thought up the Tamil encyclopaedia project, it was certainly Avinashilingam who provided the idea a dramatic impetus by announcing it on the day of Indian independence. A year earlier he had taken steps to register the Tamil Valarchi Kazhagam – literally, Council for the Development of Tamil, though officially it was called "The Tamil Academy" in English – under the Registration of Societies Act – and the Kazhagam had begun functioning in December 1946. A prospectus on the planned encyclopaedia was issued on that historic occasion.

At the time of the publication of the first volume, which happened on Tamil New Year's Day in April 1954, Avinashilingam observed in retrospect: "It occurred to me that if the flood of enthusiasm that overflowed in the hearts of our people [on attaining Independence] were to be channelled and shored up, substantial benefits would accrue. I, therefore, released, on behalf of the Tamil

Academy, a prospectus on publishing an encyclopaedia in Tamil."[1] He explained the rationale and scope of the encyclopaedia as well:

> Tamil is an ancient language with vast literary riches. Yet, despite such glories, Tamil requires other resources necessary for contemporary life . . . To attain this, it has been the long-held dream of Tamil scholars, that Tamil requires a Kalaikkalanjiyam. But the enormous amount of money that this necessitates and the sheer magnitude of the task appeared as insurmountable mountains . . . Earlier attempts were given up because it was impossible for individuals or institutions other than the Government or Universities to undertake this task.[2]

Undeterred, Avinashilingam soldiered on. His prospectus was greeted with an immediate response: Dr Rm. Alagappa Chettiar, a philanthropist and industrialist, came forward with the first subscription of Rs 10,001. The Tamil Academy's ledger of donations (1947–8) lists other donors:

> T.S. Avinashilingam 2001;
> Raja Sir Annamalai Chettiar 10,001;
> Raja of Sivagangai 5000;
> Karumuthu Thiyagaraja Chettiar 5000;
> Raja of Pudukkottai 5000 and Raja of Ettayapuram 2000.[3]

[1] *Kalaikkalanjiyam*, vol. I, 1954, p. v.

[2] Ibid., p. vi.

[3] *Kalaikkalanjiya Nithi Peredu*, Tamil Academy Records. There is a discrepancy between the figures that Avinashilingam gives in the Preface to the

The traditional Saiva monasteries, such as Thiruvavaduthurai, Dharumapuram, and Tiruppanandal, contributed comparable amounts. The contributors also included the film barons A.V. Meiyyappa Chettiar (AVM Studios) and S.S. Vasan (Gemini Studios), and the *Kalki* weekly, whose editor, the renowned writer "Kalki" R. Krishnamurthy, was a champion of the project. The Rs 25,000 that the Thirumala Thirupathi Devasthanam contributed did not hurt either. By 31 March 1948 the far from inconsiderable sum of Rs 1,12,563–4–0 had been collected for the project. In subsequent years the inflow of donations reduced to a trickle:

Rs 9009 (1949–50);
Rs 10,285 (1950–1);
Rs 6327 (1951–2);
Rs 5813 (1952–3);
Rs 6920 (1953–4);
Rs 14,069 (1954–5).[4]

Needless to say, these sums represented a pittance considering the magnitude of the project; they constituted barely 10 per cent of the estimated budget of 18 lakh rupees.[5]

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first volume of the encyclopaedia and the numbers in the donation ledger. The Preface gives a higher figure and is often qualified by the word "promised" and that presumably explains why the figures don't square up.

[4] Tamil Valarchi Kazhagam Peredu, no. 11, Tamil Academy Records.

[5] Avinashilingam, *The Sacred Touch*, p. 300.

Notwithstanding his sceptical view of expecting anything much from the state, Avinashilingam had no option but to turn to it. As a respected nationalist and senior Congress minister, it was not difficult for him to approach the provincial and union governments – the difficulty was the availability of funds. In Madras he found the financial position of the government far from comfortable: its annual budget at the time being only Rs 60 crores, the scope for generosity with an idealist project was limited. Moreover, with the linguistic reorganisation of states still some years in the future, Madras was a multilingual state which included a considerable Telugu- and Malayalam-speaking population, apart from one Kannada-speaking district. The agitation for a separate Andhra state for Telugu-speaking people had begun gathering steam. It might therefore have seemed invidious for the Madras government to fund a big project in one language alone. As Avinashilingam put it in his autobiography many years later, "In the then composite State of Madras, anything done for one language had to be done for other languages also."[6]

In a tactical move, he convened a meeting of Telugu personalities using the good offices of the finance minister, Bezwada Gopala Reddy. A Telugu Bhasha Samiti was formed and a Telugu encyclopaedia planned under its aegis.[7] However, nothing came of this

[6] Ibid., p. 302.

[7] Ibid., p. 297.

idea. The Andhra leaders, it would seem, were happier bickering among themselves and had little time for an encyclopaedia.

Attention therefore remained focused only on the Tamil work. The state's financial constraints, alluded to above, meant that Avinashilingam had to slash the budget allocation to Rs 12 lakh, a good third less than the original estimate. The government now agreed to fund half the reduced budget in instalments of Rs 1 lakh per annum. The Tamil Academy was expected to raise the rest from public subscriptions and other sources.

The Government of India, in the aftermath of Partition and the grave refugee crisis, was no less strapped for funds. Still, it was of some help that R.K. Shanmukham Chetty was the Union Finance Minister of the day. Avinashilingam met him and managed to extract a commitment for an annual grant of Rs 75,000 for four years.

The difficulties in making the government keep its word is another story, to which we will return in chapter 5.

4

The Headhunt

EVEN AS UNCERTAINTY loomed on the financial front, the encyclopaedia project was formally kick-started on Vijaya Dasami day of 1948. With A. Lakshmanaswamy Mudaliar – the long-serving vice chancellor of Madras University – extending his support, the project office was housed in the first floor in the northern corner of the Clock Tower Building facing the scenic Marina Beach.[1]

More daunting than the money was assembling the human resources. With no precedents for such a project, it was an immensely difficult and complex problem to find the right people to execute it. In the first instance, immediately after its inauguration, the

[1] The office continued to work in the same place until about a decade ago, when it was converted into the studio for Department of Journalism and Communication of the university. The Tamil Academy continues to function, rather more modestly, in a smaller room in the university buildings.

first editorial appointment was made with P. Thirukoodasundaram Pillai (1891–1969) designated Assistant Editor (*thunaiyasiriyar*). The son of a policeman, he had been part of the freedom struggle and was regularly shadowed by the colonial police. An honours graduate in philosophy from the Presidency College, he also held a degree in law but had given up his legal practice during the Non-Cooperation movement. An ardent Gandhian, he had been involved in the campaigns for prohibition and anti-untouchability. He had been editor of the Tamil *Harijan* and later *Gandhi Vazhi* (the Gandhian path). Despite his Gandhian leanings, he was an early champion of birth control. As one who had long been in public life, he was well connected with a number of reputed figures.

Two letters by Gandhi to Thirukoodasundaram in the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* provide a window into the recipient's mind. In the first, Gandhi asks him not to get agitated over a deficient public purse that had been given to Gandhi at Palayamkottai; the Mahatma assures Thirukoodasundaram this is only an instance of what has often occurred and should not be taken to mean lack of honesty in the organisers. In the second letter Gandhi tells him that the call to burn the Manusmrti should not be equated with setting fire to foreign cloth. While conceding that the Manusmrti contained "many things that are bad" – Gandhi saw these as later interpolations – it also held "much that is admirable". The Mahatma also says that though an end to

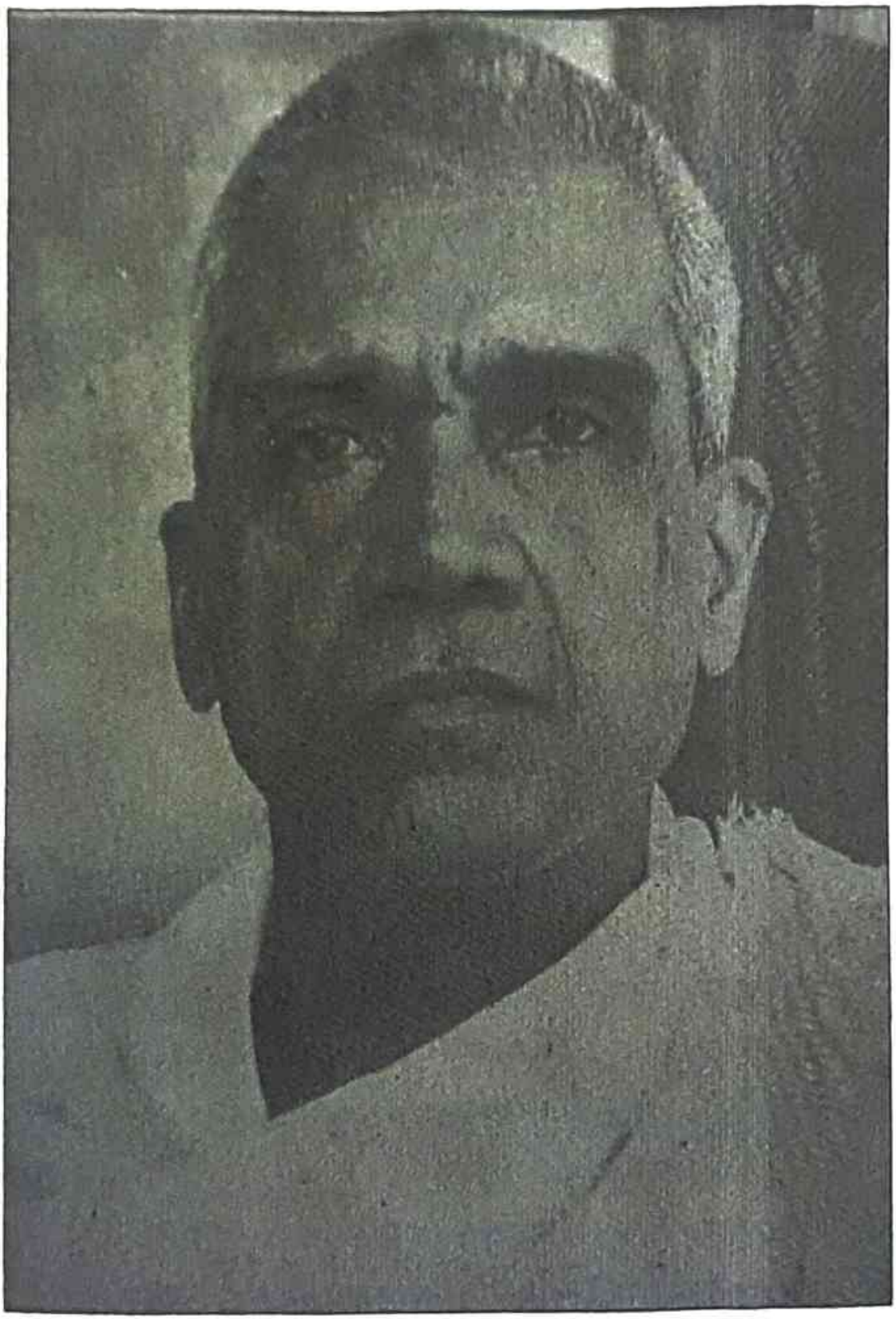

Fig. 4.1: P. Thirukoodasundaram Pillai

untouchability is essential for "attain[ing] swaraj by effort from within," the British insistence on it is "hypocritical and illegitimate." If the first letter points to Thirukoodasundaram's scrupulous honesty in accounting for public money, the second indicates his progressive views on caste.[2] While Thirukoodasundaram endorsed Periyar's strong views on reforming Hinduism, he emphatically disagreed with the radical and implicitly anti-Gandhian view that such reform should precede the achievement of political independence. Thirukoodasundaram's view on the reactionary views of the Vellalar elite – the caste to which he belonged – was the reason that led him into spirited polemics in favour of reform.[3]

All the above notwithstanding, Avinashilingam did not believe that Thirukoodasundaram could head the project. In looking for a chief editor he was keen to find someone "who could handle science and mathematics". The headhunt began in right earnest.

The first name considered was T.M. Bhaskara Thondaiman, a civil service officer and judge. Steeped in medieval Tamil literature and with a deep interest in temple architecture, Bhaskara

[2] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. XXXV, pp. 390–1, letter dated 18 December 1927; and vol. XXXVI, pp. 293–4, letter dated 4 May 1928. The reference to one Pillai on p. 463 in the latter volume is not to Thirukoodasundaram – the index has got it wrong.

[3] For more on this, see Venkatachalapathy, "Dravidian Movement and Saivites, 1927–44".

Thondaiman was a respected Tamil scholar with good connections of the kind the encyclopaedia was going to require. But Avinashilingam was miffed when, over their first meeting, Bhaskara Thondaiman discussed only his remuneration. The interview went nowhere.

Avinashilingam being dissatisfied with the various other names that came up, the Tamil writer "Kalki" R. Krishnamurthy, citing a well-known Tamil proverb – "why look around for ghee when butter is at hand" – asked why they should cast about when "our own Periaswamy is around". The name he suggested was a most unlikely candidate: Manjakattuvalasu Palanivelappa Periaswamy Thooran (1908–1987).[4]

Thooran had taken a B.A. in mathematics from Presidency College, Madras, and subsequently obtained a teaching licence (or an L.T., as it was then called). Even as a college student he, along with his fellow students – C. Subramaniam, the architect of the Green Revolution; N.D. Sundaravadivelu, later vice chancellor of Madras University; Dr L.K. Muthusamy, and others – had organised a cultural group called Vanamalar Sangam and published a literary monthly, *Pithan*. Thooran had also been resourceful enough to get the approval of the editor of the nationalist daily *Swadesamitran* – where the great nationalist poet Subramania Bharati had worked and to which he had contributed extensively –

[4] For a biography of Thooran, see Balasubramaniam, *Ma.Pa. Periaswamy Thooran*. Ra.Ki. Rangarajan, *Thooran Endra Kalanjiyam*, is grossly inadequate.

Fig. 4.2: M.P. Periaswamy Thooran

to transcribe and compile Bharati's uncollected writings from its back numbers for publication.[5] Soon he became a schoolteacher and, at the time of his appointment to the encyclopaedia project, was headmaster of the Ramakrishna Vidyalaya, a school managed by Avinashilingam.

Fired by idealism, Thooran had written copiously: poems, lyrics, children's verse and stories, but nothing that had set the Kaveri on fire. Barely forty years of age, his appointment to the chief editorship took many by surprise. According to Thooran, Avinashilingam had, at the very outset, categorically told Thirukoodasundaram that his age, fifty-six, was primarily why he had not been thought suited to the top position. Probably as a sop, Thirukoodasundaram was soon redesignated Joint Editor (*koottasiriyar*): he could have been excused for not relishing the prospect of working under a man seventeen years younger, and moreover someone considerably less experienced and accomplished. Very possibly, he saw Thooran as an upstart. According to a younger colleague, the atmosphere in the project office was charged and tensions ran high through the making of the encyclopaedia.[6] Mercifully, this did not affect the outcome, and

[5] The outcome of this effort was *Bharati Tamil*, a landmark anthology of Bharati's uncollected writings, edited by Thooran. First published in 1953, some years after he joined the encyclopaedia project, *Bharati Tamil* remains an indispensable source for Bharati scholars, especially because of the care Thooran took to date Bharati's writings and arrive at a chronology.

[6] Subramanian, "Kalaikkalanjiya Bhakti", p. 136. Thirukoodasundaram

Thirukoodasundaram continued to serve the project until 1962, just before the ninth – and penultimate – volume was published.

Over the next few years at least three assistant editors, three clerks, a driver, three proof-readers, an artist, an accountant, and a special assistant to the chief editor were appointed. It is said that at one point nearly fifty people were employed in the project. But the acquittance register of the Tamil Academy does not bear this out. (See Table 4.1 for a list of the staff with their monthly salaries.) I.K. Subramanian, assistant editor in the final years of the project, recalls that their office looked like "a factory with the constant tapping of the typewriter keys." Sometimes it even seemed like "a royal court in full attendance".[7] The job of the assistant editors seems to have been crucial, with Thooran and Thirukoodasundaram overseeing their work.[8]

According to N. Subrahmanian, a historian who served as assistant editor for about two years (1951–3), the contribution of one of the assistant editors, P.M. Somasundaram Pillai, was critical.

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makes no mention of his work in the *Kalaikkalanjiyam* in his interview to the Tamil literary monthly *Deepam* some years after he left it. Thirukoodasundaram, "Interview".

[7] Ibid., p. 134.

[8] Thooran, *Ninaivugal*, p. 67. Unpublished manuscript with Thooran's son M.P. Swathanthira Kumar. The manuscript has now been published: Balasubramaniam, ed., *Periaswamy Thooran Nainaivu Kurippugal*.

Table 4.1: Monthly Salary of the *Kalaikkalanjiyam* Staff

Name	*1956*	*1957*	*1958*	*1959*	*1960*	*1961*	*1962*	*1963*
M.P. Periaswamy Thooran, Chief Editor	450	475	475	525	635	660	685	685
P. Thirukumasundaram, Joint Editor	365	380	410	440	495	510	525	–
P.M. Somasundaram, Assistant Editor	250	265 –	295	325	379.25	396.87	414.50	–
O.R. Krishnaswamy, Assistant Editor	190	200	220	240	303	332.37	–	–
J. Raju Mudaliar, Assistant Editor	160	170	190	200	200	210	220	–
P.M. Rathnasabapathy Mudaliar, Artist	132-8-0	140	155	170	198.85	–	–	–
S.R. Ramamurthy, Clerk	48	51	57	84	103.50	113	122.50	124.50
E. Duraikkannu, Driver	61	64	67	70	80	85	90	93
R. Parthasarathy, Boy	40	41	50	72	76	69.50	75.50	76.50
C.M. Moharasundaram, Proofreader	132-8-0	140	155	170	177.50	–	192.50	192.50
K. Madurai Mudaliar, Proofreader	157-8-0	165	180	195	187.50	185	202.50	–
D. Vajravelu, Clerk	48	51	57	81	110.50	120	129.50	131.50
S. Sundaresan, Assistant to Chief Editor	–	–	155	175	195	195	205	205
N. Vedachalam, Clerk	–	–	48	48	51	75	113.50	115.50
T.V. Kamalakannan, Accountant	–	–	–	–	147	147.50	160	165

Source: PF / Welfare A/c Notebook, April 1956–March 1960 and Acquittance Roll, October 1958–October 1963, Tamil Academy Papers.

Note: Up to 1960, the figures refer to basic pay alone; from 1961 to 1963, the figures refer to gross monthly salary.

Fluent in Kannada and Telugu, apart from Tamil, Somasundaram Pillai was also well versed in Botany and Zoology – Thooran himself attested to his competence and importance.[9] Another assistant editor, N.K. Nagarajan, was in charge of the entries for Physics, Chemistry, and Mathematics. N. Subrahmanian himself took care of History, Economics, Geography, and Political Science. One P.A. Bashyam Aiyangar, listed as part of the editorial board in the first volume, joined in 1953 – nothing is known about him. Two other names that figure as assistant editors in the acquittance register are O.R. Krishnaswamy and J. Raju Mudaliar. I.K. Subramanian, who joined as assistant editor in 1964, says two younger men followed him: C. Karupannan and S. Kannan, the latter the son of the noted intellectual and activist Neelavathi Ramasubramaniam.[10] Unsurprisingly, there were few women in the encyclopaedia team or its various committees: four among over a hundred subject experts; three in a review committee of nearly seventy scholars, and none at all in the technical terms committee. At the highest level of the executive committee, there were similarly none.[11]

P.M. Rathnasabapathy Mudaliar was the artist. Siruvai Mohanasundaram's later reputation as a legendary proof-reader rested

[9] Thooran, *Ninaivugal*, p. 84. Afflicted by an eye ailment, Thooran says he used a magnifying glass to correct the proof sheets.

[10] Subramanian, *Innum Oru Piravi Vendum*, p. 59.

[11] For the contribution of women to the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, see Thomas, *A Position to Command Respect*.

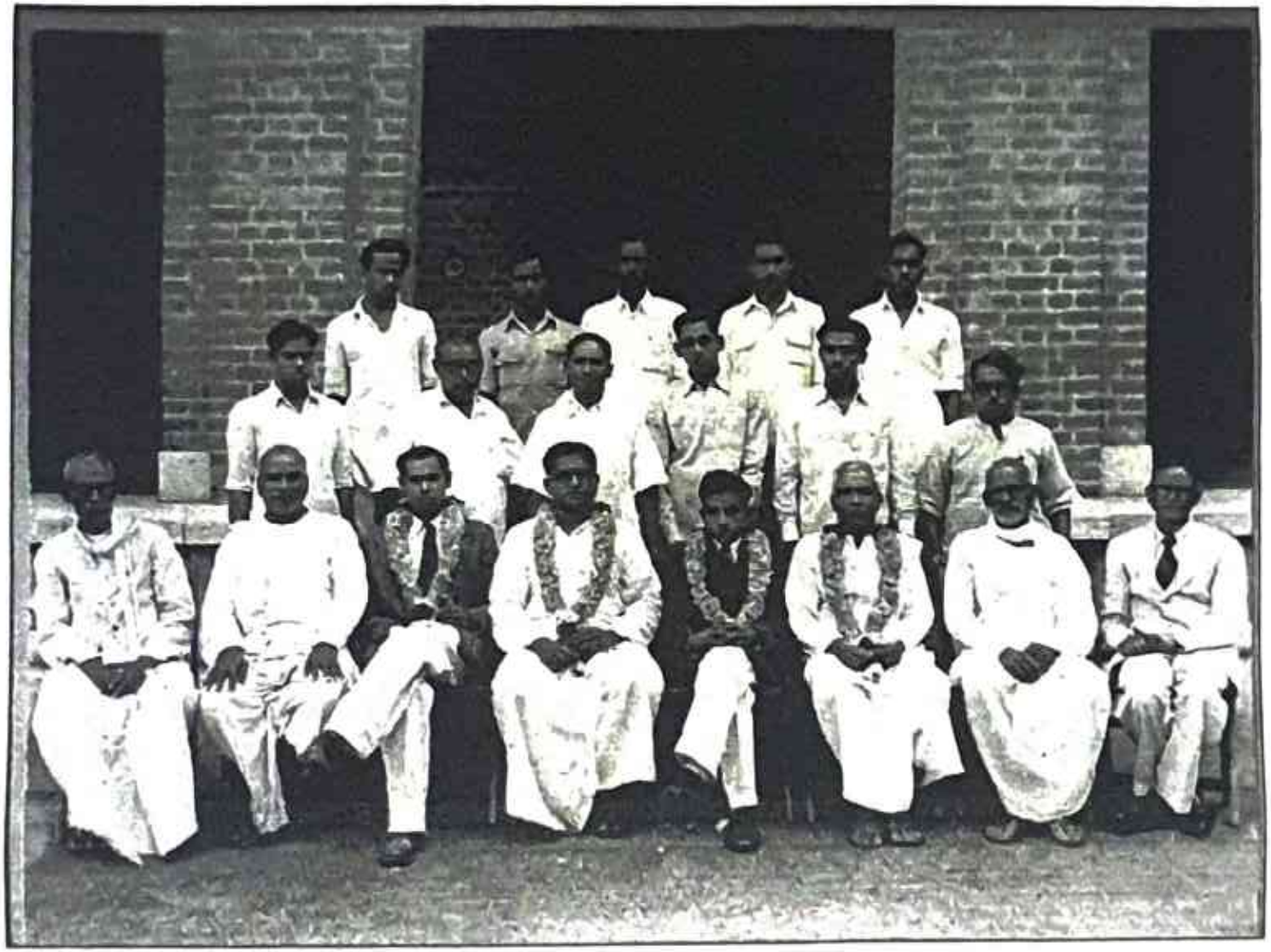

Fig. 4.3: Staff of the Encyclopaedia Project, circa 1952

largely on his work on the encyclopaedia. Another proof-reader was K. Madurai Mudaliar.

Thooran started on Rs 350 per month, gradually rising to Rs 450 (1956); Rs 475 (1957–8); Rs 525 (1959); and Rs 575 (1960). Thirukoodasundaram's monthly emoluments were Rs 365 (1956); Rs 410 (1959); Rs 440 (1960). During the same period P.M. Somasundaram drew from Rs 250 to Rs 350 per month. The monthly salary of the artist and the proof-readers ranged between Rs 132 and Rs 170. (For more details on staff salaries, see Table 1.) When N. Subrahmanian joined in 1951, his first salary was Rs 182–4–0.[12] Many years later he wondered in his autobiography what the extra quarter rupee was for![13]

Compared to teachers, for instance, the remuneration offered to the encyclopaedia staff was noticeably low.[14] Avinashilingam believed in running a tight ship, his view being that high wages did not constitute work incentive.[15] The Nehruvian socialism in

[12] In 1957, the Indian currency was decimalised. Until then, a rupee consisted of 16 annas, and an anna consisted of 12 paise, and was expressed as rupee–anna–paisa (0–0–0). The new decimalised paisa was called "naya [new] paisa" or NP. The sum of one anna was deducted for the revenue stamp when the salary register was signed.

[13] Subramanian, *En Vazhkai Varalaru*, p. 272.

[14] Apart from low salaries, there was also no security of tenure or other perquisites such as leave benefits, encashment of leave, and retirement pensions and benefits that government employees took for granted.

[15] Thooran, *Ninaivugal*, p. 134.

each. In 1949 the Government of Madras made him a grant of Rs 5000, apart from letting him a house in Arunachala Naicker Street in Chintadripet, off Mount Road, Madras.[23] We do not know who was behind this state patronage, but, in keeping with Sambasivam Pillai's run of luck, it turned out a curse in disguise.

In 1953, even as the printing of his third volume was under way after a gap of fifteen years, Sambasivam Pillai died. He was seventy-three. As he had passed away intestate and with no legal heir, the Tahsildar of Madras locked and sealed his house, emptied and perhaps "attached" the contents, and locked them up in the Collector's Office in Madras. Nobody seems to have cared for the fate of the valuable manuscripts, the printed and unbound formes, and the dead man's other books.

About ten years later V. Subbiah Pillai, founder of the renowned publishing house South India Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society, and the Maraimalai Adigal Library got wind of the whole sorry situation. Using his contacts in government, in 1966 Subbiah Pillai gained access to the Collector's Office, rolled up his sleeves, and searched it. He found a deal-wood box full of medical books and *nikantus* (traditional verse dictionaries). Next to the box, on a rack, he found the moth-eaten manuscript of the unprinted volumes

[23] Subbiah Pillai, "Padam Thokuthalil Pattarivu".

vogue at the time had influenced plenty of idealists over this period and was often counterproductive: it was for financial reasons that N. Subrahmanian left the encyclopaedia and joined A.M. Jain College, Madras, as a lecturer.[16] Being a pensioner, Thooran recalls, P.M. Somasundaram was content with his low salary and worked without complaint. Yet he also recalls, perhaps more pertinently, that though the staff did not put money above their work, many left when they were able to secure higher-paid jobs. As a result, it fell upon Thooran to train the new hands that replaced the old, adding to his burden.[17] I.K. Subramanian says in his autobiography that he was, one fine day, aghast to hear from his colleagues that the encyclopaedia employees were not tenured and would be on the street once the project came to a close; considering that he was a young man with a long career ahead, they advised him to seek greener pastures and move on before it was too late. He was in two minds: he liked his work and was in awe of Thooran's commitment to the project; on the other

[16] N. Subrahmanian later became reader in history at the University of Madras before his appointment to Madurai Kamaraj University as professor – when it was set up in 1965; he ended his career as professor of history at the newly inaugurated North Eastern Hill University, Shillong. Apart from his Ph.D. – his *Sangam Polity*, considered a landmark in Tamil historiography, was based on this dissertation – he acquired the Vidwan title in Tamil, a tough course of study to train teachers in Tamil. He wrote prolifically in both English and Tamil.

[17] Thooran, *Ninaivugal*, pp. 103–4.

hand he had recently married and, unfortunately for him, his bride's family had been under the apprehension that he worked in the university. When he disabused his wife of the notion, she was downcast. Subramanian thus decided to work as a graduate schoolteacher: it would qualify him to appear for an M.A. via the route of private study and enhance his career prospects. Three years almost to the day of his appointment, when he put in his resignation papers, Avinashilingam was furious. This did not cut much ice with Subramanian.[18]

Many years later, Thooran recalled with regret that he never raised the matter of low salaries with Avinashilingam because he felt embarrassed at it being interpreted as a self-serving demand.[19] To his further credit, when Thooran was offered a position by the All India Radio on a salary of Rs 700 per month, he turned it down because of his commitment to the encyclopaedia. To supplement his income he contributed to the radio off and on, and to various journals, but even this wholly justifiable interest in earning beyond his keep gave him a guilty conscience.

Money had been collected and subscriptions promised. The state had offered support. The office was in place. The staff had been appointed . . . but the magnitude of the project sank in among

[18] Subramanian, *Innum Oru Piravi Vendum*, pp. 66–7.

[19] Thooran, *Ninaivugal*, pp. 134–5.

those assembled only once the actual task of gathering and compiling the data began. The planning, organisation, and execution of the encyclopaedia were obviously modelled on the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and to those who had been asked to follow suit it hardly needed belabouring that the stupendous scale of the model was intimidating.

5

Mission Accomplished

As a registered society, the Tamil Academy was governed by a general council while its day-to-day management fell to the executive council. This executive council was presided over by Avinashilingam. C.R. Srinivasan, editor of the *Swadesamitran*, and T.K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar were vice presidents, and "Kalki" R. Krishnamurthy was the secretary – after his demise in December 1954 he was replaced by K. Swaminathan (chief editor from 1960 of Gandhi's *Collected Works*). The council's other members consisted mostly of trusted Congress leaders such as C. Subramaniam, M. Bhaktavatsalam, N.M.R. Subbaraman, and S. Vedaratnam. Along with these politicians sat writers and scholars such as T.P. Meenakshisundaram, Saw. Ganesan, and Thooran. It is inexplicable how the editor of the pulp magazine *Kumudham*, S.A.P. Annamalai, found a place in this kind of forum, a subset of which formed the managing committee.

Below the councils were positioned a series of committees. The Indian bureaucracy's fondness for concentric circles of councils and committees found fertile soil in the encyclopaedia project, as is evident from the project's many-splendoured committees.

A separate committee was naturally constituted for the encyclopaedia. Under this committee served another committee, an editorial committee, which consisted mainly of academics and scholars such as the vice chancellors A. Lakshmanaswamy Mudaliar (of the University of Madras, as noted earlier) and S.G. Manavala Ramanujam (of Annamalai University), and academics such as K. Swaminathan, T.P. Meenakshisundaram, Mu. Varadarajan, and B. Natarajan. As chief editor, Thooran sat on all these many committees. The editorial staff functioned under the editorial committee. A separate committee, formed to decide on the entries, consisted exclusively of scholars. Other sub-committees were formed for various subjects: life sciences, physical sciences, chemistry, natural history, philosophy, religion, music, anthropology, archaeology, history, politics, economics, fine arts, engineering, law, geography, medicine, agriculture, and languages (Tamil and English). These committees and sub-committees suggested headwords and came up with the names of those who would write the headword entries. Separate examining committees for each of these sub-committees were nominated to oversee and vet their work – which meant going through the entries and either approving them or suggesting revisions.

The members of all these various committees constituted a virtual who's who of intellectuals, scholars, and academics of mid-twentieth century Tamilnadu. It is plausible to suggest, however, that nothing strained the power of their minds more than being able to recall the names of the committees and sub-committees to which they had been nominated.

While the cards themselves, inscribed with entries of headwords (both in English and Tamil), have not survived in the Tamil Academy's archives, many of the ledger volumes containing lists of entries for each subject, along with their translated equivalents, are extant. It is evident from these ledgers that the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* served as the model.

Coining Words

Given the orientation of the Tamil Encyclopaedia towards modern, scientific knowledge, one of the first challenges was scientific terminology; in fact the term *Kalaikkalanjiyam* was itself a neologism drawn from *kalai*, the arts, and *kalanjiyam*, granary/treasury. The question of the technical terms that needed to be coined and used was a tough one. Even as the encyclopaedia was being conceived, a major controversy – which had raged for about two decades in the first half of the twentieth century and deeply divided the world of Tamil scholars – was being resolved in favour of coining new terms that were etymologically rooted in Tamil.[1] In many of the other Indian languages the conflict

[1] See Venkatachalapathy, "Coining Words".

was between on the one hand adopting English (Western) terms as such, and on the other coining words with Sanskrit roots. The latter, it was suggested, could serve as the base for a nationally uniform scientific terminology across India. In relation to the region of Tamil, however, there had already been a century of modern philological work arguing for the existence of an entirely separate family of languages – Dravidian, as distinct from Indo-Aryan. Therefore, a strong and ultimately successful argument had been put forward for the creation and deployment of local-language technical terms based in Tamil root words. For instance, as noted, encyclopaedias in other languages used terms and combinations of terms such as *vishwa, kosha, vividha, mandala,* and *sangraha,* Tamil opted for a Tamil coinage, *Kalaikkalanjiyam.*

Within this controversy, Avinashilingam had come in for strong criticism from Tamil scholars for his perceived bias towards Sanskrit. Thooran, who was so enamoured of the style of Maraimalai Adigal – the great scholar of Saivism and Tamil literature, and the father of the *Tani-Tamil* (Pure Tamil) movement – that he had committed to memory that savant's entire commentary on the Sangam text *Mullaipattu,* had little doubt that such a pure Tamil style was wholly unsuited to the encyclopaedia. But by the time the Tamil encyclopaedia project was launched it had become impossible – especially for an iconic project such as this was, and directed at a large general public – not to adopt the dominant view.

The obvious solution being to form a committee, a technical terms committee with representation for the various disciplines was constituted for the coining and defining of technical terms that were to be consistently used in the encyclopaedia. The preface to the first volume of the *Kalaikkalanjiyam* observes:

> It was after we commenced our project that the enormity of the task sunk in. How to express in clear Tamil, words and concepts hitherto never thought of or expressed in the Tamil language? It is patently obvious that there would be no Tamil terms for such objects. The first problem was how to express them in Tamil. When we examined how this problem had been tackled in other languages it was clear that wherever it was indispensable terms had been adopted from other languages. A conference – of education ministers and vice chancellors – convened by the central government too had recommended that such technical terms be employed making the necessary changes. Science, higher mathematics, chemistry, engineering and other sciences have been employing many symbols over the years. Apart from the 26 letters of the English alphabet, symbols such as "theta" (φ) have also been in use. Such concepts being absent in Tamil, naturally, equivalent symbols are also absent. However, in order to acquire the scientific knowledge necessary for today's life these symbols are indispensable. Yet, with the assistance of scholars, innumerable technical terms have been coined in Tamil [for this encyclopaedia]. Only in unavoidable situations have non-Tamil terms and symbols been used. Our Tamil language was born many thousands of years ago in all its fulness,

and to this day it revels in its vitality. Our Mother Tamil knows not old age. She will remain ever virgin and beauteous. Therefore, the use of a few loan words and symbols will only strengthen her and help her to grow further.[2]

Despite this disclaimer, technical terms would prove to be the Achilles heel of the *Kalaikkalanjiyam*. As late as in 1971, three years after the Tamil Encyclopaedia was wound up, Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi, releasing the third volume of the children's encyclopaedia – prepared by the same team – pointed out that pure Tamil words such as *vizha* and *pori* should have been used rather than the Sanskrit-derived *pandigai* and *yanthiram*.[3]

The technical terms committee expended much energy and time grappling with the problem. Thooran recalled with gratitude that the committee would meet once a week and spend over three hours of the afternoon on this task. The work was honorary, and all that committee members could expect were a few biscuits and a cup of tea. The deliberations went on for about a year and a half because the committees comprised thinking people who were demanding and unwilling to consent to a new coinage until wholly happy. It was deemed a really good day's work if, over a full session, thirty technical terms happened to be finalised. By contrast there were occasions when the committee

[2] *Kalaikkalanjiyam*, vol. I, 1954, p. vi.

[3] "From the Archives: Fifty Years Ago, 19 October 1971", *The Hindu*, 19 October 2021.

terminated its session without consensus on even a single term. Thooran gives a great example of how T.P. Meenakshisundaram coined an entirely new term for "personality" ("*aalumai*", a brilliant coinage that is in current popular use).

The contribution of the *Kalaikkalanjiyam* to Tamil scientific vocabulary remains to be studied.

Contributors

Even as the hunt for contributors began and the project took off in right earnest, a specimen fascicule was released in 1948. It was meant to be a model of the planned encyclopaedia in terms of structure, language, figures, and illustrations. However, it did not yield the desired results. On the contrary it sent wrong signals and generated needless controversy. Thooran recalls that, for reasons unknown, no covering letter to explain the purpose of the fascicule was appended when it was sent out. To make matters worse, the press-meet that was meant to introduce the fascicule failed to materialise. All this caused considerable confusion, with many critics excoriating the effort because they mistook it as the final product.[4] Though some substantive and constructive criticism was indeed received, ultimately enriching the encyclopaedia, the few reviews of the first fascicule that I could trace are unduly critical (for more on this, see the Conclusion).

[4] Thooran, *Ninaivugal*, pp. 30–1.

About 1200 people ultimately contributed to the encyclopaedia. The list of contributors is staggering in its range, diversity, and competence. Virtually no major intellectual worth the name failed to contribute. Thooran took great pains to contact scholars in every field. The diary of Maraimalai Adigal includes this: "I wrote to the Chief Editor of Kalaikkalanjiyam accepting the invitation to write the entry on Saiva Siddhantam."[5] M. Krishnan, the renowned naturalist, says that "Periaswamy Thooran, who was my classmate [in Presidency College], *insisted* on my contributing 50% of the birds and beasts notes when he was in charge of the . . . Tamil Encyclopaedia."[6] Krishnan wrote about sixty entries and illustrated them with his own ink drawings.[7]

C. Rajagopalachari contributed the entry on Gandhism. Thiru.Vi. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar, K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, C.S. Srinivasachari, T.M.P. Mahadevan, M. Rajamanickam, T.V. Sadasiva Pandarathar, V. Raghavan, Mariappa Bhat – all names to conjure with – contributed other entries. As the encyclopaedia

[5] Venkatachalapathy, ed., *Maraimalai Adigalar Natkurripukkal*, entry dated 4 July 1949. In the event, passing away in September 1950, he did not live to write this entry.

[6] M. Krishnan to S. Theodore Baskaran, dated 30 January 1991. Emphasis added. I am grateful to Theodore Baskaran for sharing this document.

[7] Krishnan's contributions to the encyclopaedia have been compiled and edited by the noted Tamil writer Perumal Murugan. Krishnan, *Paravaigalum Vedanthangalum*.

Fig. 5.1: M. Krishnan

Fig. 5.1a: Eagle

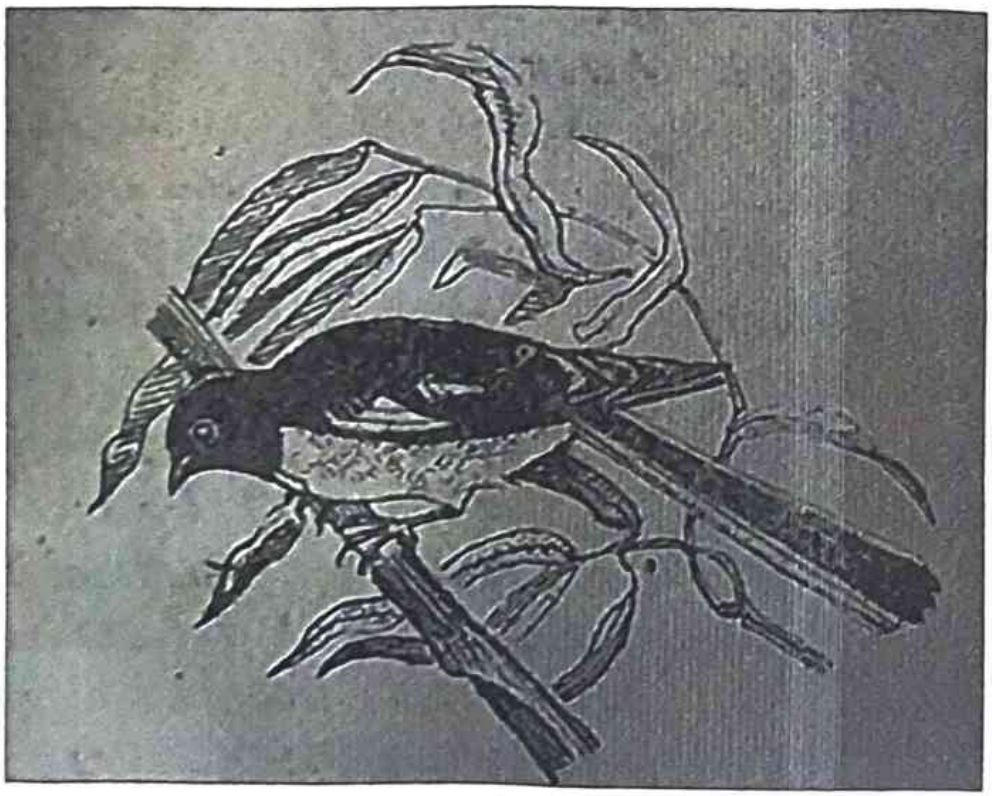

Fig. 5.1b: Scarlet Minivet

Pen and Ink Drawings by M. Krishnan

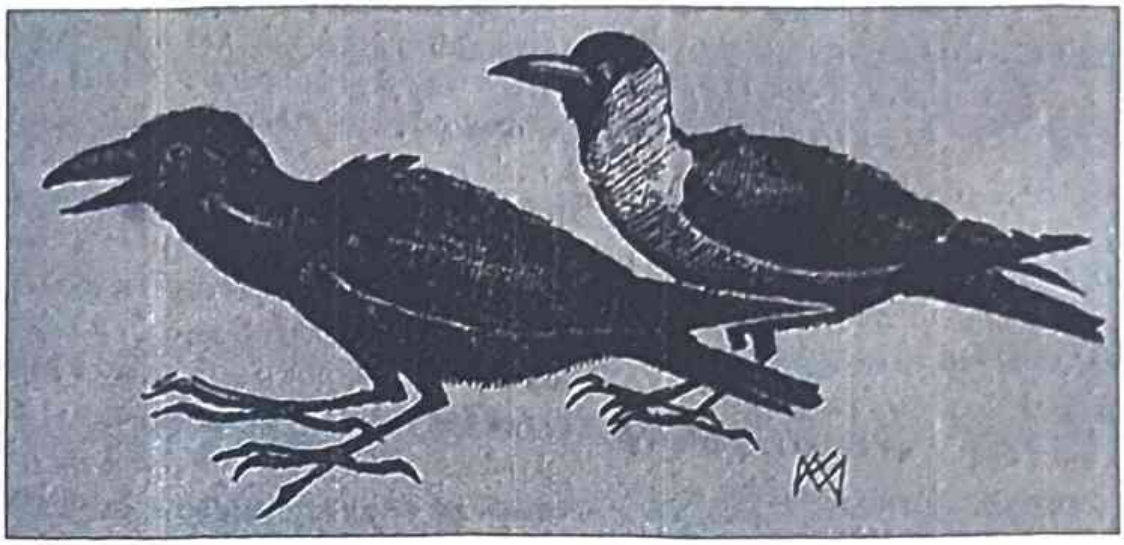

Fig. 5.1c: Jungle Crow and House Crow

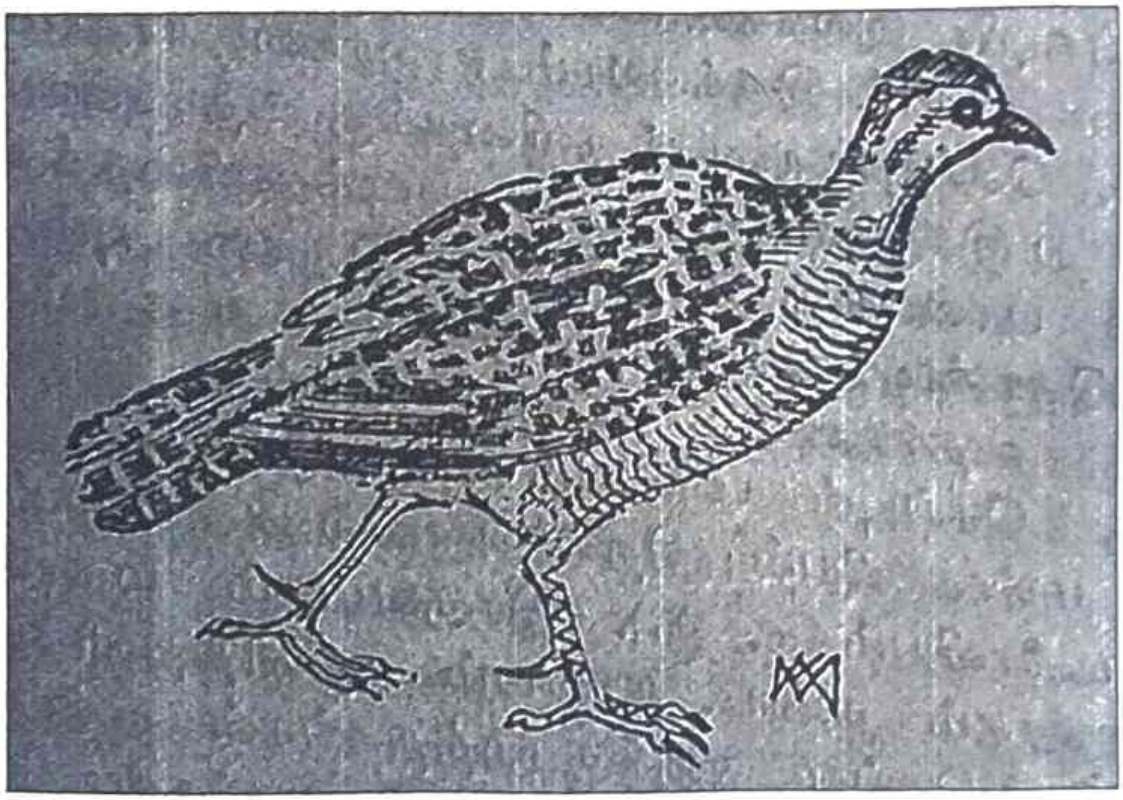

Fig. 5.1d: Partridge

office was housed conveniently in the University of Madras (an institution of great repute at that time), Thooran could count on and perhaps even take for granted its distinguished complement of professors. Eminent scholars from elsewhere – people who did not know Tamil – were also invited to contribute, a case in point being K.T. Achaya, later renowned as the historian of food and nutrition in India. M. Hiriyanna the philosopher, H.D. Sankalia the archaeologist, B.G.L. Swamy the botanist, C. Sivaramamurti the art historian, and Irawati Karve the pioneering sociologist were some of the other eminent contributors from outside the immediate Tamil world. Another prize catch was K.S. Krishnan, the physicist and collaborator of C.V. Raman. Thooran even succeeded in roping in some of the leading academics at Yale, Cornell, and the New Zealand universities.

While Columbia University's renowned anthropologist Margaret Mead burnished the list of contributors, women contributors were in general sparse – around sixty, or only about 6 per cent of the contributors. They included E.T. Rajeswari; M. Lakshmi, who was, incidentally, the older sister of M. Krishnan; Rajeswari Natarajan, the daughter of Bhaskara Thondaiman (earlier noted as the first to be considered for editorship of the *Kalaikkalanjiyam*); and R. Thamarajakshi, the distinguished economist.[8] Other contributors included A. Vasantha, A.K. Vasumathy, A. Seetha, and Kamalakshi – all college teachers –

[8] E.T. Rajeswari (1906–1955), a protégé of T.P. Meenakshisundaram,

in fact many of the women contributors were college teachers. And it is particularly heart-warming to see how many unknown names, some of them schoolteachers, contributed astonishingly competent entries.[9]

An entire section of this chapter, if devoted to one contributor, T.P. Meenakshisundaram, a.k.a. TPM (1901–1980), would still seem insufficient. He was an intellectual that the Cambridge mathematician G.H. Hardy, had he had the good fortune to meet him, would have positioned him in "the Bradman League". TPM was utterly extraordinary – not only as the encyclopaedia's lead contributor and primary adviser, but also more generally. The first in his community to graduate from a college, he had soon after acquired a law degree. Having been drawn to the nationalist movement as a young man, he had then been involved in organising the working classes of Chennai.

In the late 1920s he was part of a group that squarely took on the atheistic campaign of Periyar's Self-Respect movement,

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taught physics at Queen Mary's College. She was the pioneering author of some notable books on popular science in Tamil. M. Lakshmi (1896–1958) was the daughter of the renowned early Tamil novelist A. Madhaviah. A victim of domestic abuse in her husband's family, she left her spouse and pursued an academic career of her own, becoming arguably the first Tamil woman to write a travelogue. For more on her, see Venkatachalapathy, "Travels Within the Self".

[9] See for instance the entry on A. Singaravelu Mudaliar who compiled the *Abithana Chintamani*.

Fig. 5.2: E.T. Rajeswari

against which he engaged in a bitter polemic. After courting arrest in the Individual Satyagraha movement, he joined the Tamilarasu Kazhagam, a faction within the Congress that sought to combine Tamil nationalist aspirations within the ambit of a broader Indian imagination. (As we shall see later, the intellectuals of the Dravidian movement were not favourably disposed to the encyclopaedia, and the presence of TPM in it only aggravated their annoyance.)

Running parallel with TPM's political life was his extraordinary intellectual journey. As noted earlier, he had in his boyhood been inspired by the *Abithana Chintamani.* Apart from his formal education, he had trained himself in Tamil's hoary literary and philosophical systems under some of the greatest traditional scholars of his time – curiously, he acquired the much "lower" title of Vidwan in Tamil after he came to be a graduate. Steeped in the literature of Tamil and Sanskrit, he also acquired proficiency in many Indian and Western languages, including Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Hindi, German, and French. He was arguably the central figure in the establishment of linguistics as a discipline in India in the 1950s. He was also a visiting professor at the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago, advising the famous philosopher-anthropologist Milton Singer on its Tamil programme.

TPM wrote scores of entries for the *Kalaikkalanjiyam.* By a conservative estimate, he wrote about 150 pages or 2 per cent

Fig. 5.3: T.P. Meenakshisundaram

of the entire encyclopaedia.[10] He wrote entries for each letter in the Tamil alphabet, and his entry for Tamil puranas reads like a treatise. This was quite apart from contributing at every level of the making of the encyclopaedia – identifying themes and contributors, vetting, editing, and overseeing translation, and coining technical terms.

During the time of the encyclopaedia's incubation and execution, TPM was conveniently located in Chennai. For most of the time, he was professor of Tamil at Presidency College, situated right next to the encyclopaedia office, before he moved to Annamalai University.

A separate ledger listed the names of the contributors with their addresses, the titles of the entries, their length, the submission deadline, and a column for remarks. Contributors were listed under disciplinary heads. The entries in these several columns indicate how the admittedly difficult process of co-ordinating the work of contributors was handled.[11] A typewritten slip of paper in one of the files indicates the remuneration table for contributors (see Table 5.1). It would seem from this table that

[10] The contributions of T.P. Meenakshisundaram have now been compiled and published as a separate volume: Sundaram, ed., *Tamil Kalanjiyam*.

[11] Katturaigal Koduthavarkalin Peyarum Vilasamum, Tamil Academy Papers.

the remuneration being offered could not have been the reason for most contributors agreeing to write. N. Subrahmanian remarks that it took a lot of coaxing, cajoling, and chivvying to extract entries from the contributors. His account of how the entries were sought and prepared for inclusion is also a window into the general ambience of the project:

> I was in charge of overseeing and making emendations, when necessary, entries relating to History, Economics, Geography, Political Science, etc. Writing entries not contributed by subject experts too was my responsibility . . .
>
> . . . During my tenure at the Encyclopaedia, I got to know some scholars who were my teachers. Professor R. Bhaskaran was my teacher at Annamalai University . . . I would pick his brains extensively. He had an inimitable style of expounding profound ideas in eloquent English. I also renewed my contacts with R.P. Sethu Pillai, Professor of Tamil, who had also been my teacher at Annamalai. I also got to know Dr Balakrishna, Professor of Economics, Dr Rajalakshmanan, Professor of Statistics, Alexander Rodriguez, Professor of Political Law . . . T.V. Mahalingam was then Reader in History . . . I would meet him frequently in connection with contributions for the encyclopaedia. I would also visit his home for discussions. Contributors would not easily meet the deadlines. Even though they were remunerated, they would submit their entries only after repeated reminders . . . B.M. Thirunaranan (Geography) and K.K. Pillay (History), then Professors at Presidency College, would often come to the encyclopaedia office. As I had to consult them in their areas of expertise, for the encyclopaedia, I got to

know them well . . . I was also fortunate to earn the friendship of Dr V. Raghavan, Professor of Sanskrit.[12]

I.K. Subramanian recalls some entries not materialising despite the staff's best efforts, the blankness of the relevant columns indicating their pending arrival. The effort to make contributors cough up wasn't exhausted until there was no escaping the conclusion that to persist in chasing them was idiocy. At this point the straightforward solution decided upon was for one or the other assistant editors to fill in for the evasive contributor and write up the entry.[13]

Most technical entries were written by experts, often in English, and then translated into Tamil. Four copies were typed at

Table 5.1: Calculation for Remuneration

	Rs NP (naya paisa)
Per line	0.15
10 lines	1.50
20 lines	3.25
30 lines	5.00
40 lines	6.50
50 lines	8.25
60 lines	10.00
70 lines	11.75
80 lines	13.25
90 lines	15.00
100 lines	16.75
110 lines	18.25
120 lines	20.00

Source: Tamil Academy Papers.

12 Subramanian, *En Vazhkai Varalaru*, pp. 267–70.

13 Subramanian, "Kalaikkanlanjiya Bhakti", p. 134.

the encyclopaedia office: one each for approval by the contributor, for the compositor, for the files, and for approval by the chief editor.[14] Once, when a zoologist sent in a 150-page manuscript for the 4-page entry requested of him, it fell to Thooran to cut it down to size.[15] In cases where the contributor knew Tamil, the translation was invariably returned for approval to its writer. At this stage a call was taken on illustrations: whether the entry required a photograph or illustration of some kind or did not.

A ledger volume which is positioned among the records of the Tamil Academy was evidently meant for monitoring the progress of the work and provides a fair idea of how the entries were given final shape.[16] Separate lists were maintained in this register for the various disciplines. For each discipline a table was maintained under the following heads and provided a systematic record of the entire process of commissioning, acquiring, and finalising the entries:

Month;
Articles received (English, Tamil, Total);
Sent to Referees;
Received after Scrutiny;

[14] Ibid., p. 137.

[15] Thooran, "Interview", p. 110.

[16] Siruvai Mohanasundaram provides a flowchart in his essay "Kalaikkalanjiyakkalai". This, however, is a missed opportunity – as proof-reader of the *Kalaikkalanjiyam*, Mohanasundaram could have provided more details and greater insight into its making. His essay is largely a facile summary of similar efforts in various Indian languages.

Sent to Authors for Revision;
Received from Authors after Revision;
Revised Articles sent to Referees;
Translated;
Edited;
Finally approved by Referees;
Sent to Authors for Final Approval;
Approved by Authors;
With illustrations Ready;
Ready for Press.[17]

N. Subrahmanian also mentions a fabulous library housed in the Tamil Academy which was meant for reference work by those involved in preparing the encyclopaedia.[18] The Madras University Library too was a place of frequent resort – presumably this library was then a better place than it is now.

Production, Publication, Distribution

The next task was the actual production of the volumes.

Between 2500 and 3000 copies of the *Kalaikkalanjiyam* were printed, starting with the first volume in 1954. While all the

[17] Progress Reports of the Tamil Encyclopaedia, Tamil Academy Papers. In the private papers of C. Rajagopalachari is a letter from Thooran dated 14 October 1955, written from the Kalaikkalanjiyam office, which says a typewritten version of Rajagopalachari's entry on "Gandhism" is enclosed for his approval. C. Rajagopalachari Papers, V instalment, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

[18] When I surveyed the collection in 2004, it still seemed reasonably rich and, importantly, well organised.

printing estimates and quotations in the files are for 3000 copies, in a letter to the Government of India Avinashilingam says: "2,500 copies are being printed. Of these about 500 copies are expected to be sold within six months and another 500 copies within the next two years. About 500 copies will be given free to donors, who have helped in various ways. The other thousand may be sold in the next five to ten years."[19]

While the price per set was fixed at Rs 250, individual copies were priced at Rs 25.

In those days, there were few presses available to execute an order of this magnitude and quality. The Vijaya Vauhini Press (of the famous moviemakers Vijaya Vauhini Studios) was first considered, but finally Avinashilingam settled for Shanthi Press at 135, Coral Merchant Street, George Town, Chennai. It required some persuading for the press to accept this order, their hesitation being on account of the demanding nature of the job.[20] Except for the last – the tenth and supplementary – volume, which was printed at Manickam Press, the others were printed at Shanthi Press.[21] The printing was of high quality – evident even from

[19] Avinashilingam to Ministry of Education, Government of India (GoI), July 1954, Tamil Academy Papers.

[20] Subramanian, "Kalaikkanlanjiya Bhakti", p. 137.

[21] Manickam Press, located in Aminjikarai, Chennai, was owned by the Nelson Type Foundry, known for its high-quality types. It had been set up primarily to print the seventeen-volume Tamil translation of the

a perusal of the volumes half a century after they appeared. The technology in use at the time was blocks of metal type set up as pages. Some of the pages included line, halftone, and multicolour (actually tricolour) illustrations which had been made print-ready at an establishment called Newton Company. Illustrations and photographs had been sourced from various museums, libraries, and embassies across the world and used with due acknowledgment – certainly a novelty in Tamil publishing. I.K. Subramanian recalls that getting the entries illustrated appropriately was bothersome despite the presence of an in-house artist.[22] Pages with multicolour illustrations had to be printed separately and pasted into the appropriate pages.[23]

Avinashilingam visited the encyclopaedia office every month from Coimbatore. If proofs were not ready, all hell broke loose. Thooran ensured the presence of personnel at the press before

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collected works of Gandhi (1955–69). This too was a project shepherded by Avinashilingam.

[22] Ibid., p. 134.

[23] This technique of printing colour photos separately and sticking them into the pages of books persisted well into the 1980s. *The Encyclopaedia of Indian Natural History* (1986), edited by R.E. Hawkins and published by the Oxford University Press in Delhi, was possibly the last major reference work to use this tehnique. I am grateful for this information to Rukun Advani, who was in the 1980s one of the OUP's editorial employees getting his fingers sticky. Similarly, Hugh McLeod's *Popular Sikh Art* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991), used original bazaar prints.

the great man's regular visitors at that time. When Viswanatha gam arrived, it was certain the first thing he would see were proofs on the table. As many as five proofs were read, the final version being approved by Thooran."[3]

The Tamil Academy entered into an agreement with Orient Longmans Limited, which then had its head office in Calcutta, as their sole selling agents.[4] Orient Longmans was expected to maintain complete stock, with a minimum quantity of 1,000 copies of these four standard quarto editions in January, April, July and October. The selling agents' gross commission was fixed at 25 per cent of the price per single copy sold. Institutions, educational institutions and libraries that bought copies from the sole selling agent were to be granted a discount of 7½ per cent. The loss to the selling agent of this 7½ per cent was to be borne equally by the Tamil Academy, with the latter also agreeing to pay for all subscriptions "received hitherto and hereafter" to the former.[5]

[3] Ibid., p. 37.

[4] The Indian publishing company Orient Black Swan was created when Orient Longmans Limited changed its name to Orient Longmans in 1970. Orient Longmans became Orient Black Swan in 2008.

[5] An agreement between Tamil Academy and Orient Longmans Limited, Madras, 1 January 1968. Tamil Academy Archive, Orient Black Swan, New Delhi. I am grateful to Dr. Ilakkuvanar Thiruvalluvan for his help in locating this agreement.

Table 5.2: Stock and Sale of *Kalaikkalanjiyam*, 1963

Orient Longmans Ltd

Madras
27 August 1963

Tamil Encyclopaedia: Stock and Sales Figures
for the Period

1-5-'63 to 31-7-'63 for Volumes 1 to 8
1-7-'63 to 31-7-'63 for Volume 9

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
					1-5-'63			1-7-'63	
Bound copies stock on hand	–	241	282	216	264	14	14	61	127
Bound stock received from the Binders	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Total	–	241	282	216	264	14	14	61	127
Sold	–	24	24	23	22	8	5	49	35
Presented	–	1	1	1	1	1	–	1	–
Balance on hand on 31-7-63 (bound copies)	–	216	257	192	241	5	9	11	92

Table 5.2 (*Contd.*)

Table 5.2 (*Contd.*)

Stock at Bombay	–	2	1	1	1	1	–	1	3
Calcutta	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1
Madras	–	208	250	185	234	1	5	4	81
New Delhi	–	3	3	3	3	–	–	3	4
Hyderabad	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	–
Bangalore	–	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3
Total	–	**216**	**257**	**192**	**241**	**5**	**9**	**11**	**92**
Sale of single copies Full price	–	–	1	2	1	1	–	1	5
Trade	–	17	17	16	16	5	4	39	18
School	–	7	6	5	5	2	1	9	12
Total	–	**24**	**24**	**23**	**22**	**8**	**5**	**49**	**35**
Expenses incurred for sending specimen copies. Re. 50									
Unbound stock, folded, gathered and collated as per printer's bill with us	–	–	200	500	800	1250	1300	1600	–
Stock with binders	–	–	5	10	–	–	305	–	–

Source: Correspondence with Orient Longmans File, Tamil Academy Papers.

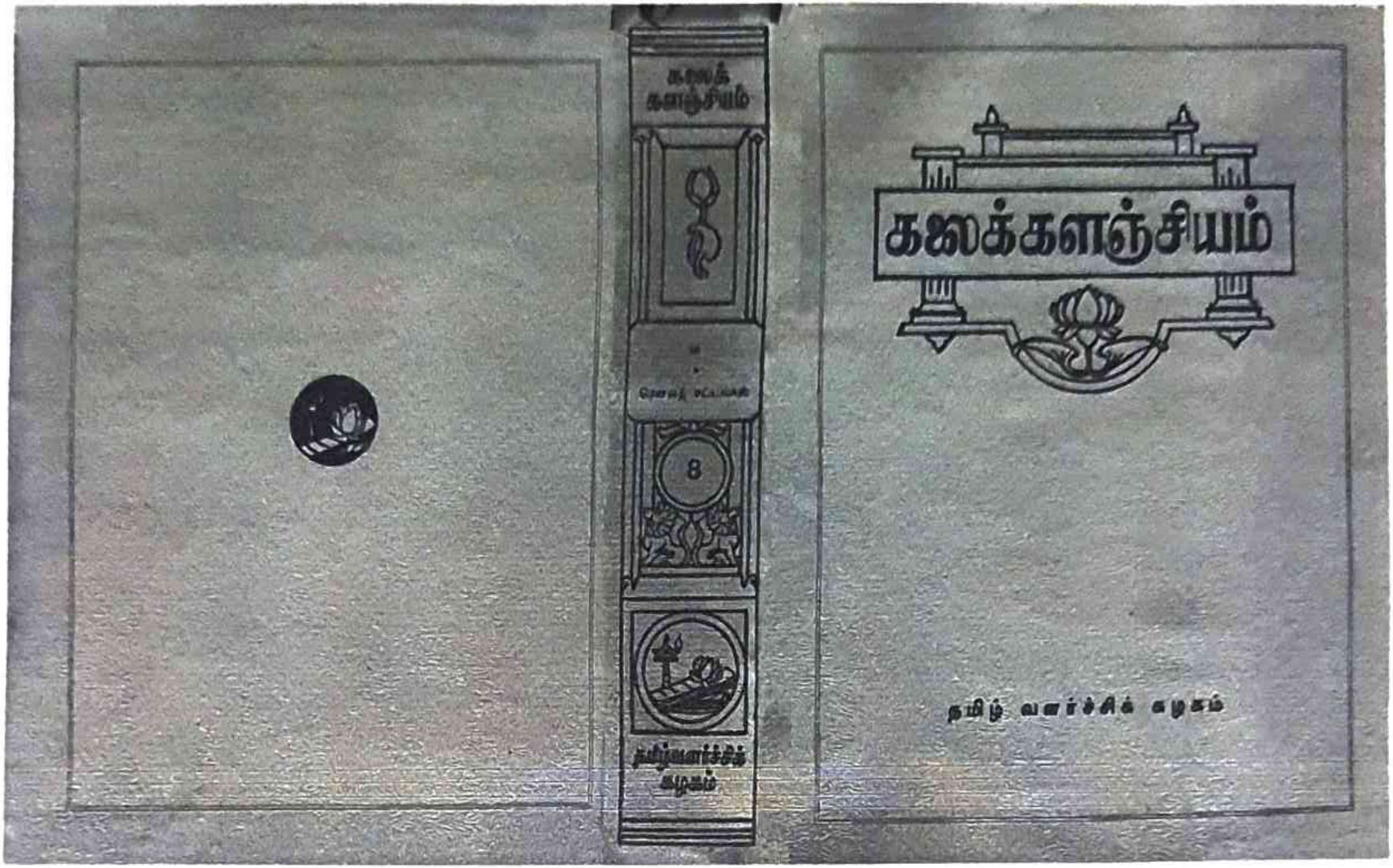
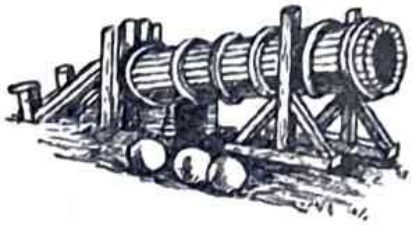


Fig. 5.4: Dust Jacket

பீரங்கி (Cannon) என்பது கையில் தூக்கிச் சென்று, போரில் பயன்படுத்த முடியாத அளவு பெரிய துப்பாக்கிகளைக் குறிக்கும். இவைகளை வாகனங்களில் ஏற்றிச் சென்று போரில் பயன்படுத்துவது வழக்கம்.



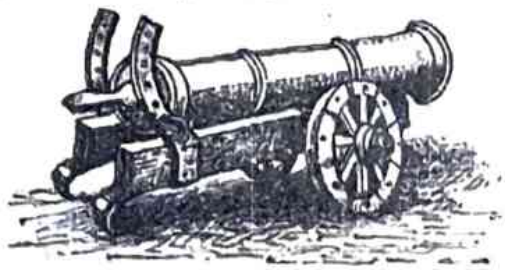
இருப்பும் பட்டைகளாலான பீரங்கி

முதல் முதலில் பீரங்கி ஐரோப்பாக் கண்டத்தில் எப்பொழு பயன்பட்டதென்று திட்டமாகக் கூற இயலவில்லை; ஆனால் ஆங்கில மன்னனான மூன்றாம் எட்வர்டு 1327-ல் ஸ்காட்லாந்து காட்டிற்கெதிராக நிகழ்த்திய போரில் பீரங்கியைப் பயன்படுத்தியதாகத் திட்ட

பின்புறமாக வெடிமருந்திட்டுச் சுடச்செய்யும் பீரங்கி

மாகத் தெரிகிறது. 1339-ல் பிரெஞ்சுக்காரர்கள் பீரங்கியைப் பயன்படுத்தினர். சுமார் 1450-ல் பெரிய பீரங்கிகள் உற்பத்தி செய்து, பீரங்கிப்படை (த. க.) எனத் தனிவகைப் படையையும் அமைத்தனர்.

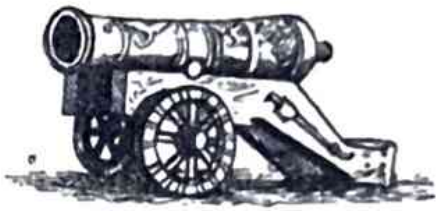
இருப்புப் பட்டைகளைப் பிணைத்துக் குழாய்போ லாக்கிக் குழாயை வலுப்படுத்த இருப்புப் பட்டையால் புன்போல் அமைத்தனர். பீரங்கிக் குழலின் வாய்ப் புறமாகவே (Muzzle) வெடிமருந்திட்டுச் சுடக்கூடிய இவ்வகை பீரங்கிக்கு எடுத்துக்காட்டாக 'மான்ஸ்



பீரங்கியை வேண்டிய கோணத்தில் உயர்த்தவும் தாழ்த்தவும் வேண்டியவாறிருக்கும் பீரங்கி

மெக்' (Mons Meg) எனப்படும் பீரங்கி லண்டன் கோபுரத்தில் (Tower of London) வைக்கப்பெற்றுள்ளது. பீரங்கியின் பின்புறமாக வெடிமருந்திட்டுச் சுடக்கூடிய வகை பீரங்கியும் விரைவில் நடைமுறைக்கு வந்தது. பீரங்கி செய்ய முதலில் இரும்பைப் பயன்படுத்தினர். பின்னர் பீரங்கி வெண்கலம் (Gun metal) எனப்படும் உலோகக் கலவையைக் கொண்டு பீரங்கி செய்தனர். இரண்டு சக்கரங்களையுடைய இரண்டு மரக் கட்டைகளின் மீது பீரங்கியை வைத்துக் கட்டினர். பீரங்கியை வேண்டிய கோணத்தில் உயர்த்தவும் தாழ்த்தவும் வேண்டிய வகை செய்யப்பெற்றது. மேலும் பீரங்கியை வைத்து எதிரிகளின் வேற்று மாறுதல் நிருப்ப ஏற்றதாகச் செய்தனர்.

பதினைந்தாம் நூற்றாண்டில் நிகழ்ந்தவிடை பீரங்கியை தோளில் அமைத்தனர். இருப்புத்



பதினைந்தாம் நூற்றாண்டு பீரங்கி

தகட்டை வளைத்துப் பீரங்கி செய்வதை விட்டுப் பீரங்கியை வார்த்து (Casting) உருவாக்கும் முறை கிபி 1400-ல் நாட்டில் நடைபெற்றது. 17, 18-ஆம் நூற்றாண்டுகளில் பீரங்கியைப் பலவகைகளாகும் பிரித்து அமைத்தனர்; பீரங்கியை அமைத்தும் பயன்படுத்தும் முறைகளைப் பற்றிய நூல்களும் வெளிவந்தன.

காலடைவில், வளை போர்க் கருவிகள் பயனற்று வரவே, பலவான பீரங்கிகள் அமைப்பதைவிட்டுச் சிலவாகச் செய்து போரில் பயன்படுத்தினர். மிகவும் எதிர்ப்பு பீரங்கி (த. க.) இரண்டாவது உலக யுத்தத்தில் மிகுதியாகப் பயன்பட்டது.

பீரங்கிப்படை (Artillery) என்பது கையில் தூக்கிச் சென்று, போரில் பயன்படுத்த முடியாத அளவு பெரிய துப்பாக்கிகளையுடைய படையைக் குறிக்கும். சுமார் 1350-ல் பீரங்கிப் படை முதன் முதலாக யுத்தங்களில் பயன்படத் தொடங்கியது. பீரங்கிப்படை ஏற்பட்ட காலம் முதல் பீரங்கிகளின் அளவும் குறி தவறுமல் எறியும் திறனும் அபிவிருத்தியாகி வந்தன.

முதல் உலக யுத்த சமயத்தில் பீரங்கிப் படைகளுக் கிடையில் முக்கியமான போராட்டங்கள் நடைபெற்றன. 1918-ல் ஜெர்மானியர் பாரிஸ் நகரத்து 'பிக் பெர்த்தா' (Big Bertha) என்ற பெரிய பீரங்கியைக் கொண்டு சுட்டனர். இந்தப் பீரங்கியானது குண்டுகளைத் தரைமட்டத்திலிருந்து 15½ மைல் உயரத்தில் 76 மைல் தூரம் வரையில் விசையேற்றி நாசம் பண்பட்டது.

பலவான பீரங்கிகளை மேடைமீதான வண்டி மீதாவைத்துச் செலுத்திய போர் முனைகளில் பயன்படுத்த முடியும். எனவே பீரங்கிப் படை விரைந்து இடம் விட்டு இடம் செல்லக்கூடியதாக இருந்தது. மேலும் இரண்டாவது உலக யுத்தத்தில் போர் விமானங்கள் பயன்பட்டதால், பீரங்கிப்படையை எதிரியின் விமானப்படை எளிதில் நாசமாக்கிவிட முடியும். இக் காரணம் பற்றியே பீரங்கிகளைப் பெரிதாகவும், பல வகையாகவும் செய்வதைவிட்டுச் சிறியவாகச் செய்து, விரைந்து செல்லக்கூடிய லாரி, ரெயில் வண்டி, டாங்கி முதலியவற்றில் வைத்துக்கொண்டு சட

Fig. 5.5: Specimen Page from the Encyclopaedia

வாசிக்கத் தொடங்கினர். இவருடைய தந்தையே இவருடைய குருவாக இருந்தார். பேத்தோவன் 11-ஆம் வயதிலேயே இசைப்பாடல்கள் இயற்றத் தொடங்கினர். 14-ஆம் வயதில் பான் கோர்ப் பிரபுவின் அவையில் உதவி இசைப் புலவராக இருந்தார். 1787-ல் உலகப் புகழ்பெற்ற இசைப் பாடலாசிரியரான மோசார்ட் (Mozart) என்பவருக்கு வாத்தியம் வாசித்தார். மோசார்ட் இசையை முதல் அடைவான் என்று கூறினர்.

பேத்தோவன்

படம்: தொலை தூரம் அறிவோம், புத பெல.

தந்தை குடிகாரராக இருந்தபடியால் தாய் இறந்ததும் 18-ஆம் வயதில் தன் சகோதரர்களையும் சகோதரிகளையும் காப்பாற்றும் பொறுப்பை அடைந்தார். இசைகற்றுக்கொடுத்துப் பணம் சம்பாதித்தார். அதனுடன் ஒத்தாண்டுகள் கல்வி கற்று வந்தார்.

1792-ல் மேற்பெற்ற இசைப்பாடலாசிரியரான ஜோசப் ஹைடன் (Joseph Haydn) என்பவர் பேத்தோவனுடைய இசை உருப்படிகளைப் பார்த்து மெச்சினர். பேத்தோவன் அவருடன் வியன்னாநகரம் சென்று கற்றார். அந்த காலத்தில் பியானோ வாசித்துப் புக முடைத்தார்.

இவர் 28-ஆம் வயதில் தமக்குச் செவிட்டுத் தன்மை விரும்பாத உணர்ந்தார். இதனுடன் வறுமை, குடும்பச் சச்சரவுகள், கோள் முதலிய சேர்ந்து வாட்டின. 1819-ல் முற்றிலும் செவிடானார். ஆயினும் இவர் இறக்கும்வரை பாடல் இயற்றிக்கொண்டேயிருந்தார். இவருடைய பாடல்களுள் மிகச் சிறந்தவை இக்காலத்தில் படைக்கப்பட்டனவே.

இவர் இராப்சுவா (Eroica) என்னும் சிம்பனியை நெப்போலியனுக்கு அர்ப்பணம் செய்தார். ஆனால் நெப்போலியன் தன்னைப் பிரான்சு காட்டின் சக்கரவர்த்தியாக ஆக்கிக்கொண்டதும், அவனைக் கொடுங்கோலனாகக் கருதி சமர்ப்பணத்தை நீக்கிவிட்டு 'சன்ஃபோன் சிம்ஃபனி' என்று அர்ப்பணத்தை மாற்றி எழுதினர்.

பேதாபேதம்: அத்துவைதம், விசிஷ்டாத்துவைதம், துவைதம் ஆகியவை வேதாந்தத்தின் சித்தாந்தங்களாயிருப்பது போலவே, பேதாபேதம் என்பதும் வேதாந்தத்தின் ஒரு சித்தாந்தமேயாகும். வேதாந்தம் என்பது பிரம ஞானத்தைப் போதிப்பது. அதன் பிரமாணங்கள் உபநிடதம், பகவத்கீதை, பிரம சூத்திரம் என்னும் மூன்றுமாகும். அவைகளுள் முக்கியமானது உபநிடதம். அது தெளிவானதும் மனிதரால் ஆக்கப்படாததுமான தெய்வீக. பகவத்கீதை பகவானே அருளியது. பிரம சூத்திரம், இவ்விரண்டிலும் அடங்கியுள்ள தத்துவங்களை சீருபமாகவும், தெளிவாகவும், சுருக்கமாகவும் போதிப்பது. இவற்றை ஆதாரமாகக் கொண்டவைகளே சங்கர, இராமானுஜ, மத்துவ ஆகிய வேதாந்த சித்தாந்தங்கள். வேதாந்தத்தில் வேறு பல சித்தாந்தங்களும் அடங்கியுள்ளன. அவற்றுள் முக்கியமானது பேதாபேதம். அது அத்துவைதத்துக்கும் விசிஷ்டாத்துவைதத்துக்கும் நடுவேயான ஒரு சித்தாந்தம்.

பேதாபேதத்தைப் பின்பற்றுபவர்கள் இக்காலத்தில் இல்லையாயினும், அதன் கொள்கைகள் சில சித்தாந்தங்களிலும் கலந்தேயுள்ளன. அத்துவைதத்திற்கும் விசிஷ்டாத்துவைதத்திற்கும் நடு நிலைமையைப் பேதாபேதம் போதிக்கிறது. பேதாபேதம் அறுநிலைகளைத் தொட்டு வேதாந்தத்தின் ஒரு பிரிவாக இருந்தபோதிலும், அதை விரிவாக உபந்நியாசிகள் பாஸ்கர், யாதவப் பிரகாசர் என்னும் இரண்டு ஆச்சாரியர்களாவர். அவர்கள் சங்கரர் காலத்துக்கும் பின்பும், இராமானுஜர் காலத்துக்கு முன்பும் தோன்றியவர்கள். பாஸ்கரருடைய கொள்கையும் யாதவருடைய கொள்கையும் பெரும்பாலும் ஒன்றுபோலேயிருந்தபோதிலும், அவைகளிடையே சில வேற்றுமைகள் உண்டு.

பேதாபேதத்தில் காணும் சுருக்கங்களைத் தத்துவம், நிதம், புருடார்த்தம் என மூன்று வகையாகப் பிரித்து உரைக்கலாம். தத்துவம் என்பது பிரமாணத்தையும், பிரமத்தின் உருவத்தையும், உலகம் ஆக்கப்பட்டும் அழிக்கப்பட்டுமுள்ள இயல்களையும் போதிக்கும். நிதம் என்பது பிரமத்தை அடையும் உபாயம் அல்லது வழி. புருடார்த்தம் என்பது பிரமத்தை அடைந்த முத்தி நிலை. இம் மூன்றின் சுருக்கம் வருமாறு:

பிரமாணம்: பிரமம் மனத்துக்கும் வாக்குக்கும் எட்டாத தத்துவமாயிருப்பதால் பிரம ஞானத்தை வேதத்தினால் பெறலாமேயன்றி, வேறும் புத்தியினாலும் காட்சியளவையினாலும் பெற முடியாது. ஆயினும் ஒவ்வொருவரும் முனிவர்களைப்போலப் பிரமத்தை நேராக அனுபவிக்க முடியும். அந்த அனுபவத்தை யுக்தியினால் ஆராய்ந்து நிருணயம் செய்ய முடியும். பாஸ்கரும் யாதவரும் இத்தப் பிரமாணங்களைக் கொண்டே பேதாபேத தத்துவத்தைச் சித்தாந்தம் செய்தனர்.

தத்துவம் வேறும் பேதமுமில்லை; வேறும் அபேதமுமில்லை, இரண்டும் கலந்த பேதாபேதம் ஆகும் அதை காம் வேற்றுமையிலே ஒற்றுமையைக் காண்பது என்று கூறலாம். இதன் பொருளைக் காரணகாரிய முறையிலும், சாதி, வியத்தி முறையிலும் விளக்கலாம்.

'இந்தக் குடம் மண்ணால் ஆயது' என்னும் வாக்கியத்தில் மண் என்பது காரணம், குடம் என்பது காரியம். மண்ணுவ காரணத்தை வைத்துப் பார்த்தால் மண்ணும் குடமும் மண்ணையாதலால் இரண்டும் அபேதமேயாகும். குடமாகிய காரியத்தை வைத்துப் பார்த்தால் பலவிதமான குடங்கள் காணப்படுவதால் இரண்டும் பேதமேயாகும். இவ்விதம் ஒருவழியாகப் பார்த்தால் அபேதமாகவும், மற்றொரு வழியாகப்பார்த்தால் பேதமாகவும் இருப்பதால் இதன் சம்பந்தத்தைப் பேதாபேதம் என்று கூறலாம் பொருத்தும்.

இவ், மனிதன் என்பது சாதி, சாத்தன் என்பது வியத்தி. சாதியை வைத்துப் பார்த்தால் அபேதமாகவும், வியத்தியை வைத்துப் பார்த்தால் பேதமாகவும் தோன்றும். அதனால் இதையும் பேதாபேதம் என்று கூறுவது பொருத்தம்.

இத்தக் கொள்கைக்குச் 'சத்காரிய வாதம்' என்று பெயர். இதுவே பேதாபேத சித்தாந்தத்திற்கு அடிப்படையான உண்மையாகும். இந்த அடிப்படையைக் கொண்டே பிரமமும் சீவனும் ஒருவகையில் வேறு; மற்றொரு வகையில் ஒன்று: இந்த இரண்டு கூற்றுகளுக்கிடையே முரண் இடையாது என்று பேதாபேதம் போதிக்கின்றது. இது எல்லாப் பிரமாணங்களுக்கும் இசைந்த கருத்தேயாகும்.

தத்துவம்: பேதாபேதமானது பிரமம், சித்து, அசித்து என்ற மூன்று தத்துவங்களையும் விளக்குகின்

Fig. 5.6: Specimen Page from the Encyclopaedia

மற்ற வழக்குகளுக்குப் பயன்படுவது. இந்த முறையில் இது மருத்துவச் சட்டவியல் (Medical jurisprudence) சேர்ந்ததாகும்.

இரண்டாவது சோக்கம் மரணத்தின் காரணத்தை அறிந்து, நோயின் அறிகுறியை அறிந்து மருத்துவத்தில் பயன்படுத்துவது. இது மருத்துவ இயலின் அறிவைப் பெருக்கும். புற்றுநோய் போன்ற பயங்கரமான நோய்கள் பற்றிய ஆராய்ச்சியில் மிகவும் தேவையாகும்.

சட்டத்துக்காகப் பரிசோதனை செய்வதற்கு இறந்தவருடைய உறவினருடைய சம்மதத்தைப் பெற வேண்டிய அவசியமில்லை. அவர் விரும்பாவிட்டாலும் பரிசோதனை செய்யப்படும்.

ஆனால், மருத்துவர் தம்முடைய அறிவைப் பெருக்குவதற்காகப் பரிசோதனை செய்ய விரும்பினால், உறவினருடைய சம்மதம் இன்றியமையாது வேண்டப்படும். உறவினர் பிரியப்படாவிட்டால் பரிசோதனை செய்ய முடியாது.

பிரேதப் பரிசோதனை செய்பவர் மிகுந்த நிதானமுடையவராக இருக்க வேண்டும். அவர் உடலை அறுத்து, உறுப்புக்களை ஆராய்வதுடன் மைக்ராஸ்கோப்பைப் பயன்படுத்தியும், மெழுகின் பதிவும், இரசாயன முறைகளைக் கையாண்டும் ஆராய்ச்சிகள் செய்வார்.

நிறையுள்ளவர் செய்தால் பிரேதம் அலங்கோல மாக ஆகிவிடாமலிருக்கும்.

பிரேம்சந்த் (1880-1936) : பாரத நாட்டு வாழ்க்கையை எல்லா வகையிலும் முழுமை பெற்ற கலியோவியமாக இந்தி மொழியில் நீட்டிய முதல் காவலாசிரியர் பிரேம்சந்த். ஆலயத்தூண்டும் வெறுங் கதைப் பருமையையே முக்கியமாகக் கொண்டாலும் கூட மலிந்திருந்த காலத்திலே, இந்தி நாவல் இலக்கியத்தை இவர் புதுமை வழியில் திருப்பி, அதற்குப் புதிய வேகமூட்டினார். தாம் வாழ்ந்த காலத்தில் தன்மையோடு முற்றும் ஒன்றி இயங்கிய இவர், அக்கால வாழ்க்கைக்குத் தம் இலக்கியத்தைக் கருவியாக்கிக் கொண்டார். வாசக

பிரேம்சந்த்

ருடைய ஆற்றல் முழுவதையும் தூண்டி, அவருடைய சமூக உணர்ச்சியைத் தட்டியெழுப்பித் தீவிர மாக்கும் அற்புதவல்லமை இவர் கதைகளுக்கு உண்டு. இந்திக் கதைஇலக்கிய உலகிலே இவர் பெற்றுள்ள இடம்மிக இணையற்றதாக விளங்குகிறது.

சேவாசதனம், நிர்மலா, கர்ம பூமி, ரங்கபூமி, கோதானம் முதலிய இவருடைய காவல்களும் நூற்றுக் கணக்கான கதைகளும் பெரும்புகழ் பெற்றவை. இவற்றுட் சேதானம் எல்லவைகளிலுஞ் சிறப்புற்ற காவல். எளிய நடை, முத்துமுத்தான மணிவாக்குகள், பாத்திரங்களுக்கு ஏற்ற பேச்சு, கச்சிதமான கதை யமைப்பு, அழகான மன ஒவியங்கள் ஆகிய அனைத்தையும் இவரது இலக்கியத்தில் காணலாம். பலவேறு இந்திய மொழிகளில் மட்டுமன்றி, ஆங்கிலேயரும், ரஷ்யரும், பூகிரேனியரும், துர்பாவியரும், சீனரும் தத்தம் மொழிகளில் பெயர்த்து இவர் கதைகளைப் படிக்கிறார்கள்.

ஆயிரக்கணக்கான மக்கள் கடியிருக்கும் கட்டத்திலே எல்லோருடைய மனத்தையும் கொய்யாவாகப் பழுதுக் கதைகளை உண்டாக்கிக் கூறவிலும் இவர் வல்லவர்.

பிரேம்சந்தின் வாழ்க்கை, வறுமையும் நிரும் கலந்த விடுதலை வீரருடைய வாழ்க்கை. காசியிலிருந்து சுமார் மைல் தொலைவில் லமஹி என்ற சின்ன கிராமத்தில் இவர் பிறந்தார். இவருக்குப் பெற்றோர்கள் இட்ட பெயர் தனபத்ராய். தன்னை மாதம் பதினைந்து ரூபாய் சம்பளத்தில் அஞ்சல் இலாகா குமாஸ்தாவாக இருந்தார். அவர் இறந்தபோது இவருக்கு வயது பதினான்கு. தாயார் இவரது ஆறும் பிராயத்தில் காலமானார். எல்லாவிதமான ரெவென்யூப் பரீட்சைகளும் வரும்புவரை படித்து, மாதம் பதினைந்து ரூபாய் வருமானத்தில் பள்ளிக்கூட ஆசிரியராகினார். தனியே படித்து, பி. ஏ. வில் தேர்ச்சி பெற்று, காலடவில் பள்ளிகளின் இன்ஸ்பெக்டராகினார். 1920-ல் ஒத்துழையாமை இயக்கத்தில் அந்த வேலையையும் விட்டார். அன்று முதல் கடைசி காலம் வரையில் தம் எழுத்துவன்மையைக் கொண்டே வாழ்ந்தார். கடிவில் 'மாதுரி' என்ற பத்திரிகைக்கு ஆசிரியராகப் பணியாற்றினார். 1924-ல் இவர் லட்சுமணபுரியில் இருந்தபோது, ஆன்மா சமஸ்தானத்து மன்னர் இவருக்கு மாமன்னர், கர் முதலிய எல்லா மரியாதைகளும் செலுத்தி, மாதம் சுமார் ரூபாய் சம்மான மனிப்பதாகக் கடிதம் எழுதினார். அதற்கு இவர், "என் வாழ்வை இலக்கியத்தொண்டு செய்து விட்டேன்" என்றார்.

உருதுவில் 'நவாப்ராய்' என்ற பெயரிலும், இந்தியில் 'பிரேம்சந்த்' என்ற பெயரிலும் எழுதினார். சினிமாப் படங்களுக்குக் கதை எழுத, இவரைப் பம்பாய்க்கு அழைத்துப் போனார்கள். சினிமாக்களுக்குள் அந்த வாழ்வு இவருக்கு வெறுத்தது. தாம் கண்ட வாழ்க்கைச் சித்திரங்களுக்கு முரணாக எதையும் மாற்ற இவர் விரும்பவில்லை. எனவே வேலையை விட்டுக் காசி வந்து சேர்ந்தார்.

இவர் சொற்றொடர் 'சுமம்ஸ்' (அள்ளம்), 'நிராசன்' (விழிப்பு) என்ற பத்திரிகைகளை நடத்திப் பல புதிய எழுத்தாளர்களை உண்டாக்கினார். வாழ்வு, சமூகம், அரசியல் ஆகிய மூன்றையும் பிணைப்பதே இலக்கியம் என்பது இவர் கொள்கை. இன வேறுபாடு, நிலையாமை, குறுகிய மனப்பான்மை, குருட்டு நம்பிக்கை ஆகியவற்றை வாழ்நாள் முழுவதும் எதிர்த்தார். குடியானவர்களின் வாழ்வையும் மத்தியதரக் குடும்பத்தினரின் இன்னல்களையும் அழகாகச் சித்திரித்தார்.

இவருடைய மகளி வெராணி தேவியார் கல்கி எழுதினார். வீட்டில் பிரேம்சந்த் என்ற தம்பியை எனச் சுமார் பக்கங்களில் இவரது அவசாழ்க்கையை நன்படம் பிடித்துக் காண்பித்திருக்கிறார். கா. ஸ்ரீ. ஸ்ரீ.

பிரேமானந்தர் (க. 1636-1734) : சூரரான்றி இலக்கியத்தில் கவிச் சக்கரவர்த்தி என்றும் அதுபிரேமானந்தரையே குறிக்கும். பிரேமானந்தர் பிரமணர். பிரோடாவில் வசித்தவர். சின்னப் பிராயத்திலேயே அவருடைய பெற்றோர்கள் காலம் சென்றுவிட்டார்கள். பிறகு பிரோடாவில் ஒரு வேம் கோவிலில் இருந்த சாதுக்களுடன் பணி புரிந்து வந்தார். அவரோடு பிரேமானந்தர் காடேகும் கற்றி, இந்தியும் சமஸ்கிருதமும் கற்றுக்கொண்டார். அவர் முதலில் இந்தியில் காவியம் இயற்றித் தம் குருவுக்குக் காட்டினார். குருவின் ஆணைப்படி தாய்மொழியிலும் தொண்டு செய்ய முற்பட்டார்.

Fig. 5.7: Specimen Page from the Encyclopaedia

Avinashilingam tried to time the release of the volumes to the Tamil New Year's Day in mid April, and invited dignitaries such as Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan to the launch. The second volume was pulished within a year's time and two volumes (III and IV) appeared in 1956. Volumes V and VI were published in 1958 and 1959, respectively. Volume VII came in 1960, VIII in 1961, and the last in 1963. All the volumes ran to about 750 pages in Crown Quarto size and were well bound in strong calico with the title printed in colour (see Table 5.3). Extreme care was taken to restrict the volumes to ten since expenditure on an eleventh would have entailed a further Rs 100,000.

Crises, Controversies, Completion

In the prefaces to the various volumes, Avinashilingam noted the many difficulties the project had encountered, with trouble

Table 5.3: *Kalaikkalanjiyam* Volumes

Volume	*Pages*	*Year of Publication*
I	742	1954
II	760	1955
III	756	1956
IV	778	1956
V	750	1958
VI	770	1959
VII	754	1960
VIII	785	1961
IX	751	1963
X	560+156	1968

over the finances given pride of place. Apparently, funds from the Government of Madras had come in smoothly, whereas with the Government of India there had been many hiccups. Avinashilingam seems to have maintained a steady correspondence with the GoI's Ministry of Education. It appears that the first instalment of the promised annual grant of Rs 75,000 was paid promptly but subsequent instalments were delayed. In mid 1949, after reporting that a chief editor and a few assistant editors had been appointed, Avinashilingam reminded the ministry of the promised second instalment and asked for its speedy disbursement.[28] A month later he sent them another reminder, this time to the education minister, the distinguished man of letters Dr Humayun Kabir. Addressing him by name, he wrote:

> You will be glad to know that the Tamil Encyclopaedia has made good progress in its work . . .
>
> . . . Dr K.S. Krishnan, Director of the National Physical Laboratory is also taking a keen interest in our work. He has consented to be a member of the Editorial Committee and to contribute some articles. We hope to get all the contributions before the end of this year and to begin the printing early next year.
>
> The Government of India has sanctioned a grant of Rs 75,000/- to be paid every year for 4 years . . . This year we have applied for the second instalment of the grant. But we have not heard anything about it so far. I shall be glad if you can kindly expedite the grant.

[28] Avinashilingam to Tara Chand, Secretary, Ministry of Education, GoI, dated 8 July 1949, Tamil Academy Papers.

I hope you are keeping well. When can I expect you at Madras?[29]

The reply was far from encouraging. The finances of the new Indian state were in the doldrums:

> Since we accepted this liability and paid the grant in 1948–49 the financial position of the country has considerably deteriorated . . . The Government of India would be glad if you are good enough to explore the possibilities of slowing down the work . . . so as to manage without a grant from us for the time being . . .[30]

Slowing the steadily gathering momentum of the encyclopaedia was the last thing on Avinashilingam's mind; he was a man with the eagerness of a bloodhound who has caught the scent and will not give up until he has hunted it down. His missionary impulse on behalf of his compendium has all the hallmarks of the diehard dedication often found in the zealot. Apart from writing to the deputy secretary of the finance department he wrote to the distinguished academic Dr Tara Chand, secretary at the finance department, to whom he described the encyclopaedia as "perhaps the biggest work of the kind in India," adding for good measure that "It was

[29] Avinashilingam to Humayun Kabir, Minister of Education, GoI, dated 12 August 1949, Tamil Academy Papers.

[30] L.R. Sethi, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Education, GoI, to Avinashilingam, dated 8 September 1949, Tamil Academy Papers.

undertaken on the strength of promise of contributions from the Governments of India and Madras."[31] The correspondence that began in mid 1949 continued into early 1950. Writing to Tara Chand again, Avinashilingam says:

> This great work would cost nearly 12 lakhs of rupees. Sale would fetch only nearly three lakh rupees. And it could be produced at a net loss of nine lakhs of rupees. We depended upon the grant of three lakhs of Rupees . . . before we started on this great cultural work. It will not be fair for the Government of India to withdraw their support after the work has been started and commitments made.
>
> I appreciate your difficulties at that end. But this is after all a small amount in the Budget of the Government of India.
>
> We have had no reply from the Government of India over this matter for a long time and the suspense is affecting our work a great deal.[32]

But the Government of India's reply was brief and categorical: "I regret to inform you that it is not possible due to financial stringency, to give the grant during the current financial year, but we shall reconsider the matter in the next financial year."[33]

[31] Avinashilingam to Tara Chand, Secretary, Ministry of Education, GoI, n.d., Tamil Academy Papers.

[32] Avinashilingam to Tara Chand, Secretary, Ministry of Education, GoI, 11 January 1950, Tamil Academy Papers.

[33] L.R. Sethi, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Education, GoI, to Avinashilingam, 8 February 1950, Tamil Academy Papers.

True to character, Avinashilingam stayed on course nonetheless and was relentless in pursuit of the suspended grant. From the evidence of the reports and accounts submitted by the Tamil Academy, the Government of India was trying sheepishly to be placatory:

> The only reason why they [the instalments] have not been paid is that . . . Government have been faced with a very severe financial stringency during the last two years or so and, judging from your accounts, you did not need the money immediately. I can assure you that, subject of course to the availability of funds, Government will certainly honour their commitment whenever the Tamil Encyclopaedia is ready for publication and needs financial assistance.[34]

These soothing noises emanating from the Government of India did not change the bottom line: they were making it clear that for the moment the onus was entirely on the Tamil Academy to pursue the encyclopaedia as best it could. Detailed budgets and a timetable were drawn up. By November 1953 Avinashilingam was able to present a statement along with a covering letter:

> We are glad to be able to say that the matter for the encyclopaedia is well in hand and the first volume has been given to the press. Paper has been purchased for the first and second volumes and orders for

[34] Ashfaque Husain, Ministry of Education, GoI, to Avinashilingam, 10 April 1951, Tamil Academy Papers.

blocks have also been given. It is expected that the first volume will be published in February 1954.

Hereafter we will have to incur the expenditure on the publication of these volumes, progressively as and when they are published . . . The total approximate cost for the 10 volumes is expected to be Rs 7,78,290–12–0 of which already Rs.1,49,415–10–0 has already been spent.[35]

After juggling numbers and figures, the Tamil Academy now scaled down its demand: instead of the promised Rs 225,000 it requested only Rs 150,000. However, apparently, even after Rs 700,000 had been spent and six volumes published, Avinashilingam was reduced to sending reminders to the Government of India with not a naya paisa hoving into view.[36] The work was being executed by drawing only on donations and the state government's contributions (Table 5.4).[37]

A Near-Disaster

Even as Avinashilingam was struggling to raise resources and trying his best to oil the wheels of government so that it emptied its coffers with what it had promised, his project faced a disaster that nearly derailed it.

[35] Avinashilingam to Secretary, Ministry of Education, GoI, 9 November 1953, Tamil Academy Papers.

[36] See Avinashilingam to Humayun Kabir, 16 July 1960, Tamil Academy Papers.

[37] I have not been able to find any paper trail of the Government of Madras' grants.

Table 5.4: Income and Expenditure Statement of the *Kalaikkalanjiyam*

Income		*Expenditure*
Govt of India 75,000-0-0 up to	31-3-1948	2,897-10-6
Govt of Madras 3,61,941-10-0 up to	31-3-1949	13,214-14-11
Donations 1,97,768-8-10	1949–50	23,804-3-7
	1950–51	28,001-15-3
	1951–52	30,617-11-9
	1952–53	37,326-11-6
	1953–54	51,985-10-3
	1954–55	61,905-15-6
	1955–56	74,986-6-3

Source: Calculated from the Tamil Academy Ledgers.

When the Tamil Academy was established, one S.Rm.Ct.A. Annamalai Chettiar had been appointed treasurer – on "Kalki" R. Krishnamurthy's suggestion. As funds accumulated with the infusion of grants and donations, it was resolved to invest money not required for immediate expenditure in government bonds, and the treasurer was entrusted with taking care of making the investment. But this treasurer proved, as the saying goes, a shade shadier than shady. To cover for certain financial disasters in his own life, he sold off the bonds that were meant to sustain his organisation. Thooran got wind of the misappropriation through the grapevine and informed Avinashilingam. A quick visit to the malefactor's home by the duo confirmed their worst fears: about Rs 300,000 – a good quarter of the entire budget – had been embezzled. A devastated Avinashilingam convened an urgent meeting of the committee, briefed its members, and offered to take sole

responsibility for trusting Annamalai Chettiar and losing the funds. But the committee members would have none of it and stood by Avinashilingam. With the help of C. Subramaniam, finance minister of Madras, Annamalai Chettiar was arrested and charged with the crime. The man's hapless wife, "a good and pious woman", met Avinashilingam and promised to make over her house as recompense. In the end, most of the funds were recovered and the encyclopaedia work continued. V.S. Thyagaraja Mudaliar took over as the new treasurer. It had been a close call.[38]

Continuing Difficulties

As the publication of the volumes continued apace, new problems cropped up without the older ones necessarily resolved.

The publication of volume IV (in 1956) coincided with the linguistic reorganisation of Indian states. This entailed entries and paraphernalia such as maps being revised in keeping with the changed administrative divisions and boundaries and names. This held good also for the global political map consequent on decolonisation in Asia and more extensively in Africa.

As the work progressed, Avinashilingam became aware of more and more problems. In the preface to the fifth volume he remarks: "The preparation of an encyclopaedia is a long-term project. The first encyclopaedia in English started only on a small

[38] Avinashilingam, *The Sacred Touch*, pp. 306–7.

scale. Yet it took many years . . . When one takes up such a task, unanticipated problems will indeed crop up." He takes comfort in the "grace of the Almighty and the kindness of the Tamil people that sustained the project."[39] His preface to the next volume lists other difficulties: rising costs, paper scarcity, the failing health of a few of the staff (some of whom did not survive their illnesses). It was "the grace of Mother Tamil" that ensured the project transcended such difficulties and the volumes appeared on schedule.[40] Meanwhile, Thirukoodasundaram had resigned even as the penultimate volume was getting ready for the press.

Avinashilingam was sustained through it all by the pride he took in the encyclopaedia as a demonstration that Tamil could be employed to write about subjects and disciplines in which no books using the language had yet been written.[41] He saw other hopeful signs as well. With the linguistic reorganisation of states, he expressed the hope that Tamil would become the official language of the reorganised Madras State – which it did, and an Official Language Act too was passed. He added:

> Tamil should soon become the medium of instruction in the colleges and universities of Tamilnadu. Only then will books in the various disciplines be published in our own language. This alone will aid the common people to obtain easy access to higher knowledge . . .

[39] *Kalaikkalanjiyam*, vol. V, 1956, p. v.
[40] Ibid., vol. VI, 1959, p. v.
[41] Ibid., vol. IV, 1956, p. v.

> The Tamil Encyclopaedia is doing the foundational work in this great task of transforming Tamil into the medium of instruction. There are many obstacles in this path. They are but unavoidable. But we should seek to resolve them.[6]

Apart from Avinashilingam, whose organisational skills, financial management, belief in the enterprise, and persistence with implementation were critical, the mainstay of the project for two decades was Periaswamy Thooran. From framing the content to seeing the volumes through press, he played a pivotal role in every aspect. The encyclopaedia obsessed him day and night. It was rumoured that when his daughter was diagnosed with a medical condition, his first thought was whether her ailment had been represented in the encyclopaedia.

Apart from the intellectual work were the onerous logistics. Avinashilingam was based in Coimbatore and his visits to the encyclopaedia office in Chennai though regular were periodic. Managing the editorial staff – including a resentful joint editor – and mobilising lower-level employees were part of his job, and he soldiered on without respite. Surrounding everything were tight financial controls and tough deadlines. Co-ordinating with a notoriously impatient and demanding boss such as Avinashilingam could not have been easy; Thooran's genial personality and immense patience came in handy

[6] Ibid., p. v.

but the situation took a heavy toll on his health all the same. From about 1955 he struggled gamely on with a neurological condition that interrupted his life with fits resembling those suffered by epileptics. It was said his lunch bag had more medicines than food. The best physicians could not diagnose his condition and it seems in retrospect that his illness was caused by the relentless physical, intellectual, and psychological demands of the project.

6

Bouquets and Brickbats

THE PROJECT WHICH germinated on the day of Indian independence and commenced on Vijaya Dasami day, 1947, came to a successful completion around Pongal, 1963. Well over a thousand contributors had contributed entries to its nine volumes, with the total number of pages a staggering 7000. By the time the last volume was published, some of the earlier volumes had gone out of print. Even as reprints of such volumes were being considered, efforts were afoot to prepare a supplementary volume containing entries that had been missed out as well as a comprehensive index.

Even more than other cultural artefacts, an enterprise as huge as an encyclopaedia cannot but be subject to a changing ideological climate. It has been pointed out in the Japanese context that world cultural encyclopaedias had given evidence of the shifts from nation-building to imperial expansion to Cold War, all in the space of barely half a century from the 1920s.[1]

[1] Kadia, "Epistemological Exercises".

K. Anbazhagan, a leading figure in the DMK (referred to as "Perasiriyar", or professor, in the Dravidian movement), reviewing the fascicule in his monthly journal *Pudhu Vazhvu*, wrote an extended critique of the whole venture that echoed the views of *Viduthalai*.[5] He argued for a Tamil encyclopaedia rather than tomes that would be mere translations of some English encyclopaedia: as noted, many people had mistakenly believed it was only a translation of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. He demanded an encyclopaedia constructed on rationalist lines rather than one filled with "puranic rubbish".

For this Dravidian movement ideologue, the exemplar was the French *Encyclopédie* "that heralded the French Revolution". It will be remembered that the *Encyclopédie* was hardly in the minds of Avinashilingam or Thooran; the prefaces to the *Kalaikkalanjiyam* volumes had set up the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and the *Encyclopaedia Americana* as their models and make no reference at all to the French *Encyclopédie*. Further, in relation to the technical terminology envisaged for the encyclopaedia, Anbazhagan expressed the fear, in the context of the long tussle regarding technical terms – i.e. whether a uniform

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by its de facto editor "Kuthoosi" S. Guruswamy. By 1954 he had apparently softened his stance. In his satirical column, "Kuthoosi", Guruswamy took exception to Thooran not being in the limelight on the occasion of the launch of the first volume of the *Kalaikkalanjiyam*. *Viduthalai*, 14 April 1954.

[5] Anbazhagan, "Kalanjiya Pani".

Sanskrit-based terminology or a vocabulary based in Tamil root words was to be adopted – that the *Kalaikkalanjiyam* veered towards the former. His hostility to Sanskrit ran deep enough for him to assert a preference for English terms over Sanskrit. And in relation to the resource persons recruited for the task, he smelt a distinctly pro-Indian-nationalist bias apart from an alleged pro-Brahmin bias: "Most of the members belong to Thirumurthy's caste," he remarked, this being a reference to Dr T.S. Thirumurthy who was on the committee. To offset this lopsidedness he recommended a number of scholars, including the famed mathematician S.S. Pillai, Dr M.R. Guruswamy Mudaliar, C.N. Annadurai, A. Ramaswamy Gounder, Pammal Sambanda Mudaliar, T. Lakshmana Pillai, and S. Muthiah Mudaliar. Some of the scholars suggested by Anbazhagan – such as M. Arockiaswamy the historian, A. Muthiah the economist, and the Tamil scholar Mu. Varadarajan – were indeed roped in later. Anbazhagan's charge lacked accuracy since those who were core to the encyclopaedia effort were almost exclusively non-Brahmin, save N. Subrahmanian who served briefly. It was not a charge that – given Avinashilingam, Thooran, and Thirukoodasundaram's credentials – should have stuck; yet it did and, as we shall soon see, proved costly in the long run.[6]

[6] This was the tragic fate of the monumental *Tamil Lexicon* (1924–36) edited by S. Vaiyapuri Pillai as well.

In the leading literary journal of the Dravidian movement *Ponni*, Gana. Ramanathan fired the first salvo. Condemning what he called the mixed *manipravala* style of the encyclopaedia, he demanded the use of pure Tamil.[7] Insinuating that "forces inimical [to Tamil]" were at work, he called for mobilising Tamil scholars of all hues when producing the encyclopaedia.[8]

K. Appadurai, another leading Dravidian ideologue, wrote a series of articles in *Ponni* that amounted to an extended and somewhat prolix critique of the project.[9] The substance of his argument was that there were "no rationalists" – the Dravidian movement's code for ideologues – and that the project was being executed by a cabal which was against the Dravidian movement.[10]

If this was the response of the Dravidian movement, M.P. Sivagnanam, a Congress leader with his own ginger group demanding recognition of linguistic regionalism, ridiculed the numerous linguistic infelicities and grammatical errors in the

[7] Literally, "rubies and pearls", *manipravala* refers to a Tamil prose style fashioned by medieval Vaishnava commentators that consisted of a profusion of Sanskrit words. Tamil words were rubies while Sanskrit words were pearls. In the twentieth century, this acquired a pejorative connotation.

[8] *Ponni*, 2 (8), 25 January 1949.

[9] Thooran recalled, without mentioning it by name, that a journal "to wreak vengeance for an unspecified provocation published a 13-part critique of the slim fascicule." Thooran, *Ninaivugal*, pp. 30–1.

[10] *Ponni*, 15 July 1948.

specimen fascicule. The tone of his review suggests he was miffed at not being included in the team. Apart from pointing out some howlers, he roundly criticised its language style and the large number of non-Tamil words it had unnecessarily allowed to creep in.[11]

Even *Kalki*, the project's unstinting backer, was critical of the specimen fascicule. Using examples, this weekly pointed out that the writing seemed to be by neophytes ignorant of the Tamil language and compared it to "the style of British priests in Christian schools". However, its editor "Kalki" R. Krishnamurthy inserted the emollient that such criticisms were meant to be constructive and asked the editorial board to take them in the spirit intended.[12]

As indicated earlier, and conceded by Thooran himself, the specimen fascicule was a misleading harbinger of what was in fact achieved. In retrospect, it is obvious how large it was as a false first step because when the actual volumes began appearing none of these many critics of the project engaged with them at all. The result was an accumulation of either unjustified or off-the-mark opprobrium directed at a project well before it was even properly visible in print, and very far indeed from its final shape.

[11] *Tamil Murasu*, 19 December 1948.

[12] *Kalki*, 20 March 1949.

Kalki, it must be said, was one of the few journals to consistently review the individual volumes as they were published. In a sub-editorial review of the second volume, the journal underlined the fact that while it was always easy to point out shortcomings, the need for a new terminology conforming with Tamil phonological conventions – they being the very soul of a language – could not be overlooked. While endorsing the *Kalaikkalanjiyam*'s coinage for "oxygen" (*analam*) and "hydrogen" (*neeragam*), it recommended – as may have been expected given that it was Rajaji's mouthpiece – Rajaji's coinage for "molecule" (*moolakkooru*). It ended with praise for Thooran's management of a diverse set of experts with conflicting views.[13]

P.N. Appuswamy, the doyen of scientific Tamil, reviewing the sixth volume at length, pointed out that big projects in India usually started with great fanfare but stalled once the initial energies had petered out; he was glad the *Kalaikkalanjiyam* had bucked the trend. He restricted his criticism to superficialities – errors of fact, typos, and the quality of illustrations.[14]

[13] Ibid., 24 April 1955. The third volume was welcomed in broad terms as "a modern adornment" for Mother Tamil: ibid., 28 October 1956. *Kalki* continued its support to the project even after its founder-editor "Kalki" Krishnamurthy died in December 1954.

[14] Ibid., 30 August 1959.

Criticism on similar lines was offered by the international academic journal *Tamil Culture*. Viewing the exercise as "another refutation of the charge that the Tamil language is not capable of becoming the medium of instruction in the University classes," the reviewer " V.M.G.", "wholeheartedly congratulat[ed] the editor and collaborators." He endorsed many of the new technical terms it had coined while pointing out that "some of the articles smell of too literal a translation for the meaning of the Tamil sentences to be obvious even after repeated reading."[15]

Another critic who commented on the project as it unfolded was Ka.Naa. Subramanyam. In his annual survey of Tamil literature for the Sahitya Akademi's journal, *Indian Literature*, he was guarded in his welcome: "In the field of knowledge, the editing of the *Tamil Encyclopaedia* has been going on steadily under the able editorship of Periaswamy Thooran and two new volumes have been added. It is a pioneering attempt and as successful as such pioneering attempts are ever likely to be."[16] He was also in on the act at the project's end, when he noted that "The completion of the nine-volume Encyclopaedia in Tamil under the able editorship of M.P.P. Thooran is a thing to look back upon with pride, even though the Encyclopaedia itself, like

[15] *Tamil Culture*, VII (3), July 1958.

[16] Subramanyam, "Tamil Literature".

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

Conclusion

The Encyclopaedia is Dead! Long Live the Encyclopaedia!

CRITICISMS DISCUSSED in the last chapter ultimately proved to be the *Kalaikkalanjiyam*'s undoing. Even though it was never superseded in its quality, breadth of vision, and quality of content and production – telling comparisons are the encyclopaedias produced by the Tamil University in the 1980s – the *Kalaikkalanjiyam* could not hold its own in the high noon of Tamil identity politics.[1]

By the time the supplementary volume appeared in 1968, copies of all the earlier volumes had mostly sold out. Given that the world had undergone a sea change over the fourteen years since the first volume was published, Thooran and Avinashilingam did not want to reissue the *Kalaikkalanjiyam* without making, for instance, changes in the world map following decolonisation. The question of this kind of revision being done could

[1] When I taught a course on print culture at Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli, in the late 1990s, one assignment for the students was a comparison of select entries in the *Kalaikkalanjiyam* and the Tamil University volumes; invariably it was found that the entries in the former were qualitatively superior to those in the latter.

not seriously arise in any case for the Tamil Academy was, as always, short of resources to carry it out. Whether the Tamil reading public was big enough to sustain another edition of the encyclopaedia was also a moot question. Talk of revision did frequently crop up but vanished into thin air once the enormity of the task swam into view. In any case, it would have been unreasonable to expect the same team to have revised the encyclopaedia: it was now a spent force.

All the same, intermittent attempts continued being made to revive the project and publish a revised version of the *Kalaikkalanjiyam*. When M.G. Ramachandran was chief minister of Tamilnadu (1977–87), a plan to publish it in twelve volumes of a thousand pages each was drawn up, and an event organised in Erode to launch the second edition. Thooran even spent a year training a new team. But this idea never took off.

Neither Avinashilingam nor Thooran were content to rest on their laurels. Soon after the *Kalaikkalanjiyam* project was completed, the Tamil Academy used the same team of resource persons and organisational set-up to publish a children's encyclopaedia in Tamil (1968–76). This was printed in multicolour. It also saw a second revised edition (1981–8) which was reprinted twice (in 1998 and 2009). Later, a medical encyclopaedia was published.

In 1968 Thooran was, befittingly, honoured with the Padma Bhushan. Having completed his work, in June 1978 he bade a

big adieu with a signed statement. Briefly noting the enormity of the task achieved in the face of heavy odds, he said he now wanted to retire and devote his time to writing.[2] But the encyclopaedia had taken a heavy toll on his health and he died nine years later, bedridden over the last few.

When the Tamil University was established in 1981, its first vice chancellor V.I. Subramoniam launched a new encyclopaedia project. Though he had the experience of directing the *Dravidian Encyclopaedia* under the aegis of the Dravidian Linguistic Association, Thiruvananthapuram, this proved too big a task. Moreover, no man in a tearing hurry – as was so with V.I. Subramoniam – can build a team adequate to a task so monumental, there being seldom a sufficient number of exceptionally devoted and intellectually capable people ready to work for the low salaries on offer.

For these and related reasons the volumes that were eventually published leave much to be desired. And now, in the new millennium, the digital communications revolution has made print encyclopaedias obsolete.

The vision of T.S. Avinashilingam, the indefatigable editorial energies of M.P. Periaswamy Thooran, the intellectual prowess of T.P. Meenakshisundaram, the co-operation of hundreds

[2] A signed and printed statement found among his papers, dated 22 June 1978. For the full text, see my *Tamil Kalaikkalanjiyathin Kathai*, Appendix, pp. 75–8.

of scholars, a dedicated editorial staff, and the patronage of the state as well as philanthropists and the public had all combined to realise the century-old Tamil dream of an encyclopaedia.

In the new millennium, Wikipedia made its startling entry as a variant concept of the encyclopaedia, relying on a vast global public for its contributions. The idea has been revolutionary and, despite doubts on the veracity of several entries, enormously successful: there is simply no doubt now, given how massively it is used and broadly trusted, that this digital online encyclopaedia fuelled by voluntary contributors has completely changed the field.

And not just in English. Wikipedia has been especially successful in languages which never really had a book market for big, multi-volume encyclopaedias. Blue-coloured hyperlinks have replaced q.v.s. For all its faults and often dubious reliability, the usefulness of a constantly updated Wikipedia in every major world language is now beyond dispute.

The volumes of the *Kalaikkalanjiyam* thus now line the shelves of old libraries and are a collector's item, eagerly sought out by bibliophiles.[3]

[3] In the mid 2010s the Tamil Virtual Academy of the Government of Tamilnadu uploaded on its website scanned – and therefore not searchable – copies of the entire *Kalaikkalanjiyam*.

Appendix

Agreement Between the Tamil Academy and Orient Longmans, 1953

THIS AGREEMENT made this thirtieth day of 1953 between The Tamil Valarchi Kazhagam (called in English the Tamil Academy), situated now in the University Buildings, Madras (hereinafter termed "The Academy") on behalf of itself, its administrators, successors and assigns of the One Part, and Messrs. Orient Longmans Ltd., of 17 Chittaranjan Avenue, Calcutta, and 36a, Mount Road, Madras and elsewhere (hereinafter termed "The Sole Agents") on behalf of themselves their successors and assigns, of the Other Part, whereby it is mutually agreed as follows:

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